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A Note on Transliterations

This journal aims to use a system of transliteration with a priority to make reading as accessible as possible to those with no knowledge of Middle Eastern languages rather than to adhere to strict uniformity in transliteration convention. Common English transliteration conventions for particular languages are used; e.g. Arabic *'ayn* is marked with a simple apostrophe. Colloquial transliterations in articles generally follow the author's own conventions to best reflect the quoted person's pronunciation. Words commonly used in English (e.g. Sheik or Emir) are written after English conventions.

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From the editors

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the second edition of the Oxford Middle East Review (OMER).

OMER was founded in 2016 at St Antony's College, Oxford, by two Middle Eastern Studies students who sought to create an engaging forum for students and aspiring scholars to critically discuss issues pertaining to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

In our efforts to continue this tradition, we have pursued an interdisciplinary approach for OMER's second edition. This issue includes five articles, diverse in both geography and research focus. Separately, these articles offer insightful analysis from historical, anthropological, political, and literary perspectives. Collectively, they bridge robust scholarship and timely policymaking to provide meaningful, original research, which contributes to this interdisciplinary dialogue and expands our knowledge on the wider MENA region.

The journal begins with two policy papers, both of which strive to stimulate public debate on contemporary societal and political issues. **Harrison Akins** explores the evolving security challenges emanating from the Middle East in a post-9/11 environment. In his article, he challenges the applicability of the current U.S. authorization for military force used to conduct counterterrorism operations in the region and proposes the formation of a new legal framework proportional to today's security threats. While this essay refers specifically to U.S. policy in the Middle East, it contributes to a broader debate on the legitimacy of war and the need for open discussions on the politicisation of the framing of national security policy.

Nicola Mathieson's article brings Middle Eastern Studies to the Balkan peninsula in her examination of the use of counterterrorism measures against Bosnia and Herzegovina's Muslim community. By connecting wartime narratives from the participation of the *mujahideen* in the Bosnian War to the labelling of national security threats and separatist movements in BiH, Mathieson emphasises the current intimidation and persecution faced by Muslim Bosniaks and highlights the necessity of an international definition of terrorism.

These pertinent political discussions are followed by longer essays that offer in-depth analysis on various subjects pertaining to the scholarship on the MENA region. **Ines Gassal-Bosch** provides a nuanced account on the manner in which Islam is approached and accessed by second-generation Muslim communities in Germany through a case study in Berlin-Kreuzberg. Dispelling totalising narratives surrounding

the role of indoctrination and the spread of radical agendas through the Internet, Gassal-Bosch's research reveals a selective and critical use of digital sources by young Muslims. Her article illustrates the multiplicity of interpretations and lived experiences of Islam that are used to navigate questions about faith and identity when coming of age.

Chris Hitchcock's piece offers an insightful window into the late Ottoman era by exploring the intersection of politics and literature represented in the works of the poet Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfī. Loyal to the idea of a cosmopolitan Ottoman polity, incipient Arab nationalism, and Turkish republicanism, al-Ruṣāfī illustrates the complexities and flexibility of Middle Eastern national identity in the early twentieth century. Hitchcock's use of literature as a means to reflect on political identity not only contributes to a growing scholarship on the criticism of the historiography of the Ottoman period, but also offers new possibilities for research beyond Ottoman studies by challenging limited interpretations of the nation and preferred forms of government.

Finally, **M. H. Ilias** delves into the migration experiences of South Indian labourers in Gulf states during the late twentieth century. Using a "history from below" approach, Ilias draws from these migrants' testimonies, highlighting their memories of travel and perceptions of the society and culture of their host states. Through his use of oral history, Ilias not only offers a voice to an otherwise unrepresented group of people in the traditional historiography of the Gulf region, but also provides alternative perspectives to the recorded accounts on the post-colonial transition of Gulf societies and state formation in the region.

The subsequent issue is the result of the combined efforts of the authors, peer reviewers, and the OMER editorial board. We would like to thank each and every person who contributed to the production of this journal, as well as the Middle East Centre and St Antony's College, for their ongoing encouragement and support.

By continuing the tradition of past Middle East Centre research initiatives, we hope OMER contributes to critical scholarship, and ultimately, encourages debate and reflection on the wider MENA region.

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Policy Section

The 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force and America's Endless War

Harrison Akins

The Trump administration has argued that it is able to indefinitely deploy troops to fight the Islamic State under the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), which was passed in the aftermath of 9/11 to target al-Qaeda and its allies. This policy paper will argue that the 2001 AUMF is no longer applicable to these counterterrorism operations given the distinction between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. Further, al-Qaeda's organization has evolved to a loose network of affiliated groups adopting the al-Qaeda brand that act autonomously within their own local conflicts. Despite the tendency to frame U.S. counterterrorism policy through the al-Qaeda frame, this current network is disconnected from the conditions outlined in the 2001 AUMF. Therefore, a new legal framework for U.S. counterterrorism operations is needed that supersedes the original authorization.

In late February 2018, letters from Pentagon and State Department officials to members of Congress were released outlining a plan to keep U.S. forces indefinitely deployed in Syria and Iraq, even in territory that had already been cleared of Islamic State fighters.[1]

As legal justification, the Trump administration cited a nearly seventeen-year-old law, the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), which granted the president the authority to pursue al-Qaeda and its allies following 9/11. The AUMF has become ubiquitous in American counterterrorism operations under the Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations, having been invoked for military deployment in nineteen different countries. While testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in October 2017, Defense Secretary James Mattis argued that a new authorization "is not legally required to address the continuing threat posed by al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and ISIS."[2]

In confronting these arguments, it is important to ask whether the conditions of this law and the threats it identifies are still applicable to the security challenges facing the U.S. today. While the U.S. government still perceives counterterrorism and imminent threats through the narrative frame of the 2001 AUMF and its focus on al-Qaeda, the nature of the al-Qaeda network has fundamentally changed. Its affiliate groups, many of whom were founded after 2001, are operating increasingly independent from the al-Qaeda core, focusing predominantly on their local conflict environments. As a result of these shifting security conditions, the 2001 AUMF is no longer applicable to operations targeting these groups.

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[1] Charlie Savage, "U.S. Says Troops Can Stay in Syria Without New Authorization," *New York Times*, 22 February 2018.

[2] Nicole Gaouette and Laura Koran, "Tillerson, Mattis: We Don't Need New War Authorization to Fight Terror," *CNN*, 30 October 2017.

This policy paper will first provide an overview of the 2001 AUMF and its underlying assumptions. It will next discuss the distinction between the Islamic State and al-Qaeda and the adoption of the al-Qaeda brand by affiliate organizations. It will conclude with recommendations for a new legal framework for counterterrorism operations.

The 2001 AUMF

With just one vote against the bill, the United States Congress passed the AUMF three days after the attacks on September 11, 2001.[3] In 243 words, this law authorized the president "to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the U.S. by such nations, organizations or persons."[4] The passing of the AUMF was shaped by the impulse to act following the attack by al-Qaeda and was framed to target the Taliban government in Afghanistan, which provided protection to Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network.

The general language of the 2001 AUMF, however, is not geographically or temporally bound. It has been used to authorize the deployment of military troops in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, Kenya, Niger, Cameroon, Uganda, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Djibouti, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, Cuba, and Kosovo.[5] It also authorized U.S. drone and air strikes in Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, Libya, and Syria. Furthermore, this law requires no mechanism for oversight by or consultation with Congress for presidential decisions to deploy forces, essentially permitting an endless war against terrorism subject to the discretion of the president.

There are two assumptions that underpin the interpretation of this law: the nature of al-Qaeda's network and the notion of self-defense. The AUMF is inextricably linked to al-Qaeda as the perpetrator of the 9/11 attacks without specifically mentioning the organization's name. It leaves the scope under which it can be used intentionally general in order to be able to attack associated groups, such as the Taliban. The invocation of al-Qaeda links for targeting terrorist groups has been the hallmark of presidential counterterrorism rhetoric since the passing of the 2001 AUMF. However, there are no clear criteria or definition from the U.S. government about which groups are classified as an affiliate to al-Qaeda. This also connects to the idea that actions taken against al-Qaeda's associates constitute a defensive action to counter an imminent threat and prevent future attacks against the U.S., a necessary condition to invoke the 2001 AUMF. In 2013, President Obama argued at the National Defense University: "under domestic law, and international law, the United States is at war with al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and

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[3] Democratic Congresswoman Barbara Lee of California issued the only vote against the AUMF in 2001 because of her concerns about the lack of Congressional oversight and the ambiguity of the law. See Austin Wright, "How Barbara Lee Became an Army of One," *Politico*, 30 July 2017.

[4] "Authorization for Use of Military Force," PL 107-40 [S.J.RES 23], 107th Congress, 2001.

[5] Charles Pena, "Here's Why Authorization to Use Military Force is so Important," *Hill*, 4 December 2017.

their associated forces. We are at war with an organization that right now would kill as many Americans as they could if we did not stop them first. So this is just war—a war waged proportionally, in last resort, and in self-defense."[6] Shortly after taking office, the Trump administration also cited the al-Qaeda threat and the necessity for self-defense in justifying continued drone strikes in Yemen.[7]

Al-Qaeda versus the Islamic State

The Trump administration's argument that the 2001 AUMF authorizes the deployment of troops in Syria is premised on the understanding that the Islamic State represents the same global network of terrorists that attacked the U.S. on 9/11. Unlike the al-Qaeda core responsible for 9/11, the Islamic State (then known as al-Qaeda in Iraq) was formed in 2004 in response to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Its campaigns of violence have been shaped not by operational control from Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda leadership, but by the political turmoil in Syria and Iraq. Thus, the Islamic State and al-Qaeda represent two distinct organizations with differing aims.

The roots of the Islamic State lie in the chaos of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq and the efforts of the Jordanian Abu Masab al-Zarqawi. Despite fighting with bin Laden in Afghanistan during the 1980s, Zarqawi was reluctant to join forces with al-Qaeda and relinquish operational independence.[8] However, following negotiations, Zarqawi and his followers from disaffected Sunni tribes affiliated themselves with al-Qaeda in 2004, becoming al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). There was tension from the beginning between the two groups. The core leadership of al-Qaeda focused on targeting the U.S. and other Western targets. Zarqawi, on the other hand, saw his fight through the frame of Iraqi politics, focusing on fomenting sectarian war against the Shi'a-led government along with its Sunni collaborators.[9] AQI's sectarian violence and brutality towards fellow Muslims strained its relationship with al-Qaeda who privately wished to "sever its ties" with the group.[10] A letter from bin Laden, uncovered following the 2011 raid in Abbottabad, stated that he was ordering fighters in Iraq "to stay away from anyone who is fighting the crusaders during this phase, regardless of whether they are atheists, secular Ba'thists, or infidels." Concerned that sectarian violence and attacking fellow Muslims would undermine al-Qaeda's goals, Zarqawi, bin Laden reiterated, "had clear instructions to focus his fighting against the invader occupiers, starting with the Americans."[11] Zarqawi

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[6] Mary Louise Kelly, "When the U.S. Military Strikes, White House Points to a 2001 Measure," *NPR News*, 6 September 2016.

[7] Barbara Starr and Ryan Browne, "U.S. Orders First Drone Strikes Under Trump," *CNN*, 24 January 2017.

[8] Daniel L. Byman, "Comparing Al Qaeda and ISIS: Different Goals, Different Targets," *Brookings Institution*, 29 April 2015.

[9] Brian Fishman, *The Master Plan: ISIS, Al Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 47.

[10] Daniel L. Byman and Jennifer R. Williams, "ISIS vs. Al Qaeda: Jihadism's Global Civil War," *Brookings Institution*, 24 February 2015.

[11] Oren Dorell, "New Documents Show bin Laden was Warned of ISIL's Brutality Against Muslims," *USA Today*, 1 March 2016.

was killed in 2006 by a U.S. airstrike and, despite these directives from bin Laden, his successors remained focused on local sectarian politics. The Iraqi Abu Bakr Baghdadi, who was imprisoned by U.S. forces in 2004, assumed leadership of the group in 2010.

With the emergence of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, al-Qaeda central leadership hoped that Baghdadi and his followers would remain in Iraq, choosing Jabhat al-Nusra as its Syrian affiliate. The latter would themselves eventually split from al-Qaeda in July 2016. Baghdadi refused to accept this arrangement and, in defiance of al-Qaeda, moved his group into Syria in 2013. The group adopted the name the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and focused on territorial control to create their Caliphate. With continued frustration over attacks against fellow Muslims, al-Qaeda officially renounced any connection to the group in 2014. An al-Qaeda spokesperson stated that the Islamic State "is not a branch of the al-Qaeda group…does not have an organizational relationship with it and [al-Qaeda] is not the group responsible for their actions."[12] Even when nominally affiliated with al-Qaeda, the Islamic State possessed a distinct leadership structure and autonomous goals at odds with the al-Qaeda core.

Adopting the al-Qaeda Brand

Al-Qaeda, following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, saw its struggle primarily as a conflict with Western forces that had occupied Muslim lands and killed Muslim civilians. Bin Laden stated, "[t]he enemy invaded the land of our umma, violated her honor, shed her blood, and occupied her sanctuaries."[13] Bin Laden focused al-Qaeda efforts on high profile attacks against American targets, such as the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, the 2000 USS Cole attack in Yemen, and the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington. In regard to the 9/11 hijackers, he stated, "[t]hey are [the *umma's*] vibrant conscience that sees it as imperative to take revenge from the evildoers and transgressors and criminals and terrorists that terrorize the true believers."[14]

Scholars and policymakers have recognized that this al-Qaeda that sparked the "War on Terror" in 2001 has fundamentally changed. The core organization has been severely weakened and a network of local groups operating under the al-Qaeda brand, but fighting for local reasons, has driven its perceived growth in recent years.[15] Many of the al-Qaeda affiliates emerged within pre-existing conflicts and adopted the brand for strategic purposes.

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[12] Liz Sly, "Al-Qaeda Disavows any Ties with Radical Islamist ISIS Group in Syria, Iraq," *Washington Post*, 3 February 2014.

[13] Bruce Lawrence, ed. *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (New York: Verso, 2005), 156.

[14] Osama bin Laden, interview with Tayseer Allouni, parts 1-6 [English subtitles], YouTube.

[15] Akbar Ahmed, *The Thistle and the Drone: How America's War on Terror Became a Global War on Tribal Islam* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 317; John Grady, "SOCOM Chief: Threats from Al-Qaeda Have Diminished in Last Five Years," *USNI News*, 27 February 2014; and Bruce Hoffman, "Al-Qaeda's Uncertain Future," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36, no. 8: 635-653.

Militant groups are incentivized to outbid their contenders, especially when there is competition over resources and support. This could take the form of increased levels of violence or adopting a more extreme ideology, such as the al-Qaeda or Islamic State brand.[16] This rebranding can carry with it increased support, a greater perceived effectiveness or even legitimacy amongst a target audience. It also leads to increased publicity and media attention. These groups with local leadership are, however, products of their conflict environment. They focus their struggle on local or regional goals, as opposed to the strategy of al-Qaeda that focuses on the West.[17]

Within Yemen, for example, the local al-Qaeda affiliate emerged from the disaffected southern tribes that had long resisted the northern dominated central government. Following the unification of North and South Yemen in 1990, many southern tribal groups saw the union as a victory for the north, and occupation of the south, with the seizure of southern land by northerners, as a major source of conflict.[18] Al-Qaeda in Yemen (AQY) emerged as a distinct organization in south Yemen in the early 2000s, with its roots in returning *mujahideen* fighters from Afghanistan. It re-established itself as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in 2009. Its ranks would swell as southern tribesmen fought for an independent South Yemen, increasingly targeting the Yemeni security services. This group, however, drew the attention of the U.S., which dispatched drones, cruise missiles, and Special Forces against AQAP targets. The Trump administration has continued these counterterrorism operations in Yemen. Relying on the 2001 AUMF for legal authorization, President Trump approved a Navy SEAL raid in his first week after taking office and increased anti-AQAP air strikes six-fold.[19] Despite its rhetoric against the U.S., the actions of AQY/AQAP have been primarily framed by the civil conflict within Yemen. Of their 987 attacks between 2004 and 2016, 975 occurred within Yemen and 936, or 94.8 percent, were directed against Yemeni targets.[20]

Al-Qaeda is also incentivized to frame the fight of Islamic militant groups around the world as part of their own efforts as means of promoting their own brand and demonstrating their global reach, despite local groups maintaining their own distinct aims and autonomy.[21] Additionally, there are strategic advantages for governments to frame their struggle against militant groups through the al-Qaeda frame as a means of legitimizing their use of military force and potentially win support from the U.S.[22]

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[16] Barbara F. Walter, "The Extremist's Advantage in Civil Wars," *International Security* 42, no. 2 (2017): 7-39.
[17] Ahmed, *The Thistle and the Drone*, 258-289.
[18] See Harrison Akins, *The Yemen Imbroglio: Understanding the Many Layers of the Yemeni Civil War*, Policy Brief 3, no. 17, Howard H. Baker, Jr. Center for Public Policy, April 2017.
[19] Courtney Kube, Robert Windrem, and William M. Arkin, "U.S. Airstrikes in Yemen Have Increased Sixfold Under Trump," *NBC News,* 1 February 2018.
[20] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), 2017, Global Terrorism Database, available at http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>.
[21] Daniel Byman, "Buddies or Burdens? Understanding the Al-Qaeda Relationship with Its Affiliate Organizations," *Security Studies* 23, no. 3 (2014): 431-470, and Elena Pokalova, "The Al-Qaeda Brand: The Strategic Use of the 'Terrorist' Label," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2016).
[22] Caitriona Dowd and Clionadh Raleigh, "The Myth of Global Islamic Terrorism and Local Conflict in Mali and the Sahel," *African Affairs* 112, no. 448 (2013): 498-509, and Ahmed, *Thistle and the Drone*, 289-299.

Even with nominal pledges of loyalty from groups such as al-Qaeda in Iraq, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, al-Shabaab, and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, documents from the 2011 Abbottabad raid show bin Laden's frustration with lack of control over, and even opposition to, the operations of its affiliate organizations. According to a report by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, bin Laden "was burdened by what he viewed as the incompetence of the 'affiliates,' including their lack of political acumen to win public support, their media campaigns and their poorly planned operations which resulted in the unnecessary deaths of thousands of Muslims."[23] Al-Qaeda is not a centralized, or even decentralized, organization coordinating attacks around the world, but a loose network of like-minded groups that have adopted a shared brand for strategic purposes within their own conflict areas.

Conclusion

The 2001 AUMF allows for an open-ended interpretation by any administration without oversight for its applicability or specification of the duration or type of force used, and is legally subject only to the determination of the president. The generality of the language has enabled the U.S. to deploy military force around the globe without consideration of the evolving dynamics of terrorism over the past fifteen years. The original conditions of this law, bound as they were to the 9/11 attacks, are no longer applicable to the security challenges facing the U.S. in the Middle East and elsewhere within the Islamic world. Affiliates of al-Qaeda are, in fact, autonomous organizations driven by factors within their own conflict environments. The AUMF, therefore, should not be interpreted as an open-ended authorization to target groups that have simply adopted the al-Qaeda brand and had nothing to do with 9/11. It is imperative that new military authorizations are passed which supersede the original authorization for use of military force.

In recent years, a debate has emerged over the repeal of the 2001 AUMF, but it has been difficult to find the political will to reach consensus on replacement legislation. In April 2018, Senator Bob Corker, the chair of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, released a draft replacement for the 2001 AUMF. This bill, however, maintains much of the general language of the original law. It permits the government to continue to target "existing associated forces" of al-Qaeda—defined as AQAP, al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda in Syria, the Haqqani network, and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb—without temporal or geographic limit and no restrictions on the sustained use of ground forces, authorizing "all necessary and appropriate force."[24] Congressional oversight would include the requirement for the president to notify Congress within 48 hours for expanded military operations into new conflict zones and a resulting two-month review period. Congress would also revisit the law every four years, with modifications requiring a sixty-vote minimum. While this new authorization is an improvement with mechanisms for

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[23] Nelly Lahoud, Stuart Caudill, Liam Collins, Gabriel Koehler-Derrick, Don Rassler, and Muhammad al-Ubaydi, "Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?," *The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, 3 May, 2012, 2.

[24] Rachel Oswald, "Corker Releases AUMF Without an Expiration Date," *Roll Call*, 16 April 2018.

Congressional oversight, it institutionalizes many of the ambiguities within the old law—such as lack of limits on the use of force and the broad authorization to target groups that have adopted the al-Qaeda brand or are designated by the president as associated forces with al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or the Islamic State.

Instead of a single, overarching, and decontextualized legal mandate encompassing the entirety of American counterterrorism operations, separate authorizations for use of military force should be limited to the region of military deployment and connected to the scope of the targeted groups' activities. While the president holds the constitutional power to unilaterally act in the face of imminent threats, the interpretation of an "imminent threat" has been broadly applied to continuous and long-term counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda affiliates within the framing of the 2001 AUMF. New laws should, in particular, possess two features that address the problems with the 2001 AUMF: 1) mechanisms for accountability, as outlined in the proposed replacement; and 2) boundaries for its applicability. By limiting the scope of authorizations, the administration is forced to articulate U.S. security interests and objectives in a particular conflict zone with each new authorization bill. This would serve as a further check on the president's ability to indefinitely engage in foreign conflicts and would be in line with the 1973 War Powers Resolution, which limits the ability of the president to act militarily without consulting Congress. If the government continues to frame national security through the narrative underpinning the 2001 AUMF, it is essentially opening itself to an endless war of its own making.

The Intersection of the Bosnian War, the *Mujahideen*, and Counterterrorism Measures in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Nicola Mathieson

Drawing upon the history of the participation of the mujahideen *during the Bosnian War (1992-1995), Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has used counterterrorism measures against its Muslim population in a post-9/11 environment. BiH's targeting of its Muslim community has been facilitated by the lack of an international definition of terrorism or a mechanism to monitor and chastise states that misuse counterterrorism measures. To appreciate the significance of this global problem, the subsequent policy piece specifically examines Republika Srpska's use of counterterrorism measures to target members of the Bosniak community and emphasizes the importance of formalising a standard definition of terrorism.*

Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), has long prided itself on its secularity and geography as a European capital. BiH consists of three main ethnic groups: Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Muslims.[1] Bosnia's Muslim population, known as Bosniaks, have long referred to themselves as "European Muslims," usually enforcing a strict division between themselves and "Arab Muslims."

During recent years, there has been a perceived increase of "Arab" and "Islamic" influence in BiH. Illidža, a suburb west of Sarajevo, has become a hub of Arab tourism. International funding from Muslim states has contributed to the construction of Sunni mosques that stand in stark contrast to the traditional wooden mosques dotted throughout the hills of Sarajevo's suburbs. Arab tourists are increasingly investing in property throughout BiH[2] and local Sarajevans have particularly noted an increased visibility of women in hijabs and niqabs.[3] These changes are perceived to have begun during the Bosnian War.

At the failure of the international community to provide assistance to the Bosniaks during the war, Alija Izetbegovic, a Bosniak and current President of the Republic of BiH, appealed to the Islamic world for financial and military aid to protect the Muslim

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[1] According to the final results of the 2013 census, 50% of the BiH population are Bosniak, 30% Serb and 15% Croat. Rodolfo Toe, "Census Reveals Bosnia's Changed Demography," *Balkan Insight*, June 30, 2016, http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/new-demographic-picture-of-bosnia-finally-revealed-06-30-2016.

[2] "Ottoman Comfort," *Economist*, 21 January, 2016, https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21688928-arab-tourists-and-investors-are-giving-bosnia-new-shine-ottoman-comfort; Daria Sito-Sucic, "Gulf Tourism Frenzy in Bosnia Delights Business, Polarizes Locals," *Reuters*, 21 August, 2016, https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-bosnia-arabs-investment/gulf-tourism-frenzy-in-bosnia-delights-business-polarizes-locals-idUKKCN10W08L.

[3] Albina Sorguc, "Bosnia's Niqab-Wearers Brave Insults to Show Faith," *Balkan Insight*, 19 September, 2016, http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnia-s-niqab-wearers-brave-insults-to-show-faith-09-16-2016-1.

community in BiH.[4] Volunteer foreign fighters, collectively known as the *mujahideen*, also arrived to fight on behalf of the Bosniaks. Although the participation and settlement of these fighters in BiH has not fundamentally shifted the Bosniak identity, it has serious implications on the application of counterterrorism measures in BiH in a post-September 11 environment. This has been the case because of a conflation of terrorism with wartime narratives in a two-phase process. Firstly, all terrorism committed by Muslims within BiH is not only equated with radicalisation and extremism, but is linked directly to the introduction of Wahhabism by the *mujahideen* during the Bosnian War. Secondly, the presence of settled *mujahideen* in BiH after the war has led to the labelling of BiH as a potential terrorist hub in Europe. This label has allowed the entity governments within BiH[5] to use indiscriminate counterterrorism measures to target entire communities under the guise of the threat of terrorism, without risking international condemnation. This policy piece will specifically examine the use of counterterrorism measures to target Bosniak communities in Bosnian-Serbs-dominated Republika Srpska.

Mujahideen in BiH

During the Bosnian War, the UN-imposed international arms embargo disproportionately affected the Bosniaks. Serbia and Croatia supplied their respective groups of Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats throughout the war, but Bosniak fighters had no means of procuring weapons. President Izetbegovic consequently appealed to the Islamic world for aid and weapons to protect the Muslim community in BiH during the war.[6] Bosniak officials claim that they never requested additional fighters, only materials.[7] However, it is estimated that approximately three thousand foreign fighters arrived in BiH from Algeria, Afghanistan, Egypt, Pakistan, Syria, Russia, and Iraq to fight on behalf of the Bosniaks during the Bosnian War.[8]

On arrival in BiH, the *mujahideen* were first integrated into the Bosnian Army's Seventh Muslim Mountain Brigade of the Third Corps Army before the

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[4] Jennifer Mustapha, "The Mujahideen in Bosnia: The Foreign Fighter as Cosmopolitan Citizen and/or Terrorist," *Citizenship Studies* 17, no. 6–7 (October 2013): 747, https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2012.751718.

[5] The Dayton Agreement created two main entities that represent the territory controlled at the conclusion of the Bosnian War. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the larger of the two entities and predominantly consists of Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats. Republika Srpska is dominated by Bosnian Serbs. There is also the autonomous district, Brcko, located in north-eastern BiH on the border with Serbia, designed to be a buffer zone.

[6] Mustapha, "The *Mujahideen* in Bosnia," 747.

[7] International Crisis Group, "Bin Laden and the Balkans: The Politics of Anti-Terrorism," November 9, 2001, 11, http://www.intl-crisis-group.org/projects/balkans/balkansregion/reports/A400481_09112001.pdf; Mustapha, "The *Mujahideen* in Bosnia."

[8] Noting that estimates vary widely between sources from a few hundred to a few thousand. Stephanie Zosak, "Revoking Citizenship in the Name of Counterterrorism: The Citizenship Review Commission Violates Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Nw. UJ Int'l Hum. Rts. 8* (2009): 218; Steven Oluic, "Radical Islam on Europe's Frontier-Bosnia & Herzegovina," *National Security and the Future* 9, no. 1-2. (2008): 38.

establishment of a specific *mujahideen* unit, the El Mujahed, in 1993.[9] The El Mujahed has been linked to human rights abuses and war crimes including the killing of civilians and torture.[10] To date, however, no *mujahideen* fighter has been tried by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).[11]

The 1995 Dayton Agreement dictated that all foreign fighters must leave BiH within thirty days. While the majority of *mujahideen* left immediately after the war, approximately seven hundred to a thousand remained in BiH.[12] Many of these fighters obtained citizenship in the thirty-day window before the enforcement of Dayton, usually by marriage to Bosnian women or as a "reward" for their participation in the war by the BiH government.[13] The majority of fighters settled in central BiH and tended to practice Wahhabi Islam, a more conservative form of Islam than generally practiced in BiH.[14]

Extremism and terrorism linked to the *Mujahideen*
Since the settlement of the *mujahideen* in BiH, Bosnians and the international community have accused them of spreading Wahhabi Islam throughout BiH and linked this form of Islam to instances of radicalisation.[15] Admittedly, prior to the war, BiH had little to no engagement with Wahhabism.[16] However, discussions of Wahhabism or Salafism in BiH today have become indistinguishable from the *mujahideen* and are indiscriminately linked to a wide range of episodes of violence. After September 11, terrorist attacks in BiH were immediately linked to the post-war settlement of *mujahideen* and often refer back to the human rights violations committed by the El

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[9] Mustapha, "The *Mujahideen* in Bosnia," 746; Zosak, "Revoking Citizenship in the Name of Counterterrorism," 218.

[10] A list of the human rights abuses can be found within the judgement of Rasim Delic, leader of the Army of BiH. ICTY, "Transcript: Judgement Rasim Delic" (ICTY, 15 September, 2008), http://www.icty.org/x/cases/delic/trans/en/080915IT.htm.

[11] Delic, former Commander of the BiH Army was charged in 2008 for cruel treatment after being found to be the commanding officer of the El Mujahed Unit. Delic's defence argued that no member of the BiH Army had control over the actions of the El Mujahed. "Rasim Delić Sentenced to Three Years for Cruel Treatment - Press Release," ICTY, 15 September, 2008, http://icty.org/en/press/rasim-deli%C4%87-sentenced-three-years-cruel-treatment-0.

[12] Zosak, "Revoking Citizenship in the Name of Counterterrorism," 219.

[13] Zosak, 219.

[14] Wahhabism is a puritanical form of Sunni Islam. It is widely practiced in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Although coming from different roots, Wahhabism and Salafism are often used interchangeably. Bosniaks traditionally follow a more moderate form of Islam.

[15] Alma Imamovic, "Wahhabism in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Context of Global Political Islam," Dissertation, 2005, 4, 5; Mustapha, "The *Mujahideen* in Bosnia," 750; Nicholas Wood, "Bosnia Moving to Deport Foreign Veterans of 1992-95 Balkan War," *New York Times*, August 1, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/01/world/europe/01iht-bosnia.4.6942502.html.

[16] Wahhabism is a puritanical form of Sunni Islam. It is widely practiced in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Although coming from different roots, Wahhabism and Salafism are often used interchangeably. Bosniaks traditionally follow a more moderate form of Islam.

Mujahed during the Bosnian war.[17] It is believed that the *mujahideen* were connected with terrorist organisations during and after the war. For context, Osama bin Laden reportedly visited BiH during the Bosnian war to deliver aid to the *mujahideen*, and it was rumoured he was granted honorary Bosnian citizenship during this visit, although authorities have repeatedly denied these claims.[18] Moreover, two of the September 11 hijackers had trained and fought with the *mujahideen* during the Bosnian War.[19] This prompted the government to shut down in 2001 several NGOs established during the war with links to Saudi Arabia and al-Qaeda.[20] However, sustained links between the remaining fighters in BiH and terrorist organisations remain unconfirmed. Lt Gen. John Sylvester, then commander of NATO-led peacekeepers, stated that there was no threat from the remaining *mujahideen* in BiH.[21] The High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Wolfgang Petritsch, reported that BiH was not a central hub for terrorism.[22]

There were no recorded attacks or attempted incidents formally linked to the remaining *mujahideen* in BiH until 2005.[23] In September 2005, a group was found to be planning a major terrorist attack in Sarajevo. Out of the four men, two came from overseas, one had fought with the El Mujahed during the war, and one did not seem to have any connection to

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[17] Julian Borger, "Isis Targets Vulnerable Bosnia for Recruitment and Attack," *Guardian*, 25 June, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/25/isis-targets-vulnerable-bosnia-for-recruitment-and-attack; Dzidic Denis, "Bosnia's Wartime Legacy Fuels Radical Islam," *Balkan Insight*, 13 May, 2015, http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnia-s-wartime-legacy-fuels-radical-islam; "Mujahedins in BiH Smugglers, Spies, Mercenaries and Terrorists," *Nezavisne Novine*, November 12, 2015, http://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/bih/Mudzahedini-u-BIH-sverceri-spijuni-placenici-i-teroristi/341885&prev=search; Denis, "Bosnia's Wartime Legacy Fuels Radical Islam."

[18] Mustapha, "The *Mujahideen* in Bosnia," 479; Zosak, "Revoking Citizenship in the Name of Counterterrorism," 219; Zeljko Cvijanovic, "Belgrade Exploits War on Terror," *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, 3 October, 2001, https://iwpr.net/global-voices/belgrade-exploits-war-terror; Sead Numanovic, "Bosnia: Mujahedin Revival Fears," *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, 5 October, 2001, https://iwpr.net/global-voices/bosnia-mujahedin-revival-fears.

[19] Zosak, "Revoking Citizenship in the Name of Counterterrorism," 219; Brendan O'Neill, "The Bosnian Connection," *New Statesman*, accessed December 21, 2017, https://www.newstatesman.com/node/160271; National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United Nations and H. Kean, "The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States" (Washington, D.C., 2004), 147, 155, http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report.pdf.

[20] For a list of NGOs that were shut down, see: "The 9/11 Commission Report," 58; United States Department of State, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2002," April 2003, 41, https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/20177.pdf.

[21] These claims were retorted by other security officials who claimed to have interrupted a terrorist plot in the days following these comments. International Crisis Group, "Bin Laden and the Balkans: The Politics of Anti-Terrorism," 9; Janez Kovac, "Sarajevo Hit by Bin Laden Panic," *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, 18 October, 2001, https://iwpr.net/global-voices/sarajevo-hit-bin-laden-panic.

[22] Bernhard Kueppers, "Sueddeutsche Zeitung Interview Mit Dem Internationalen Beauftragten Wolfgang Petritsch"Bosnien Ist Kein Zentrum Des Terrorismus" [South Germany Newspaper Interview with the International Representative Wolfgang Petritsch 'Bosnia Is Not a Centre of Terrorism]" *Office of the High Representative* (blog), 12 October, 2001, http://www.ohr.int/?p=52901.

[23] I have argued elsewhere that this action led to the mobilisation of the mujahideen against the BiH state, leading to an increase in terrorist activities. Nicola Mathieson, "Counter-Terrorism or State Represson: How Counter-Terrorism Measures Influence Mobilisation against the State" (The University of Oxford, 2018).

the *mujahideen*. However, in this same year BiH implemented changes to the Citizenship Review Commission with the intention of deporting all remaining *mujahideen* in BiH.

The trend of connecting the *mujahideen* with terrorism in BiH has increased since the advent of the Islamic State (ISIS). In 2015, BiH had one of the largest contingents of citizens of European states (relative to the size of its population) fighting in Syria and Iraq.[24] There are unsubstantiated claims that ISIS has set up recruitment camps within BiH with the aid of former-*mujahideen* fighters.[25] This narrative has proven resilient, despite access to new technologies and significant ISIS recruitment in other European states, which shows that recruitment in BiH cannot be unequivocally blamed on the settlement of the *mujahideen* after the Bosnian War.

Indiscriminate targeting of counterterrorism measures

The UN Security Council passed Resolution 1373 (2001) on 28 September 2011 in a unanimous vote within the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in response to the September 11 attacks.[26] Acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter,[27] Resolution 1373 dictates states' obligation to prevent and tackle terrorism within their domestic sphere, as well as participate in international counterterrorism efforts.[28] However, the UN failed to formulate a unified definition of terrorism. As a result, states can use the excuse of terrorism to target opposition and minority groups without the risk of condemnation from the international community. In BiH, the connection between the *mujahideen*, al Qaeda, and September 11 led to immense international pressure for the BiH governments to address terrorism. It is clear that this narrative has also been hijacked to perpetuate wartime animosities.

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[24] Vlado Azinović and Muhamed Jusić, "The Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighter's Bosnian Contingent," 2015, http://www.atlanticinitiative.org/images/THE_LURE_OF_THE_SYRIAN_WAR_THE_ FOREIGN_FIGHTERS_BOSNIAN_CONTINGENT/The_Lure_of_the_Syrian_War_-_The_Foreign_ Fighters_Bosnian_Contingent.pdf.

[25] Walter Mayr, "Sharia Villages: Bosnia's Islamic State Problem," *Spiegel Online*, April 5, 2016, sec. International, http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/islamic-state-presence-in-bosnia-cause-for-concern-a-1085326.html; BiH has the largest contingent of foreign fighters in Syria per capita of any European state. It is reported that the first wave of recruits were former Mujahideen fighters that viewed the civil war in Syria as another jihad. The second wave is predominantly of young men labelled as "born-again" Islamists. Azinović and Jusić, "The Lure of the Syrian War," 8.

[26] Security Council: Counter-Terrorism Committee, "About the Counter-Terrorism Committee," accessed 21 August, 2017, https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/about-us/.

[27] Charter VII allows the UNSC to order all states to take or refrain from specified action see Paul C. Szasz, "The Security Council Starts Legislating," *The American Journal of International Law* 96, no. 4 (October 2002): 901, https://doi.org/10.2307/3070686; Andrew Hudson, "Not a Great Asset: The UN Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Regime: Violating Human Rights," *Berkeley J. Int'l Law 25* (2007): 6.

[28] See clause 1 of United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 1373 (2001)," UNSC Resolution (New York, 28 September, 2001), http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05340/SN05340.pdf.

Counterterrorism measures in Republika Srpska

Republika Srpska has used counterterrorism measures to target their returnee refugee population of Bosniaks. On 27 April 2015, Nerdin Ibric, a 24-year old Bosniak, opened fire on the Zvornik police station in northeastern BiH in Republika Srpska. The attack killed Dragan Djuric, a Bosnian Serb police officer, and wounded two others.[29] Other officers on site killed Ibric during the exchange. It was widely reported that Ibric shouted "Alluha Akbar" before opening fire.[30] The incident was immediately labelled as a terrorist attack by an Islamist extremist, and Ibric was identified as a member of the Wahhabi community. Reports thus linked the attack to the *mujahideen* community in BiH. In a press release, the president of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, responded to the shootings, stating that "[t]he Republic of Srpska has been shot, and we have the right to defend ourselves and we shall do it."[31] The Government of Republika Srpska formed Operation Ruben to respond to the shooting. According to Dodik, Operation Ruben "aims to collect information on possible security threats."[32] In the subsequent days, thirty Bosniak individuals were taken into custody[33] across thirty-two separate operations.[34] Interior Minister Spokesperson Salamandija stated "[W]e found arms and ammunition" connected to those apprehended with fighting in Syria.[35] However, none of those detained in the raids were charged with terrorism.

Sadik Ahmetovic, a Bosniak Member of Parliament (MP) from Republika Srpska, told reporters that "all Bosniaks were being treated as terrorists."[36] Drawing on the experiences of Bosniaks during the war, Ahmetovic claimed that "Bosniaks are in fear and feel like it's 1992."[37] There were reports of harassment of Bosniaks in their homes, with police questioning Bosniaks over the possession of kitchen knives and religious books in retaliation for the shooting.[38] Similarly, in August 2016, Republika Srpska

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[29] Aida Cerkez and Dusan Stojanovic, "Police Station Attack in Bosnia Reignites Ethnic Tensions," *Associated Press*, 28 March, 2017, https://www.abqjournal.com/576300/police-station-attack-in-bosnia-reignites-ethnic-tensions.html.

[30] Cerkez and Stojanovic.

[31] Republic of Srpska Government, "The Government of the Republic of Srpska Condemns the Terrorist Attack in Zvornik," 28 April, 2015, http://www.vladars.net/eng/vlada/ic/ns/Pages/The-Government-of-the-Republic-of-Srpska-condemns-the-terrorist-attack-in-Zvornik-.aspx.

[32] "Goal of Operation Ruben - To Protect People in Srpska," *SRNA*, May 7, 2015, http://www.srna.rs/novosti1/301873/goal-of-operation-ruben---to-protect-people-in-srpska.htm.

[33] World Bulletin, "Bosnia: 30 Detained over Alleged Weapons Smuggling," *World Bulletin*, accessed 6 November, 2017, http://www.worldbulletin.net/world/158894/tanzania-opp-agree-to-field-presidential-candidate; Elvira M Jukic, "Bosnian Serb Mass Arrests Alarm Bosniaks: Balkan Insight," *Balkan Insight*, 5 August, 2015, http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnian-serb-terrorism-related-arrests-raise-ethnic-concerns.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Jukic, "Bosnian Serb Mass Arrests Alarm Bosniaks."

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

held counterterror drills with Serbia on the river Drina.[39] Preparations for the exercises involved intense Serbian military presence including tanks, troops, and helicopters in eastern BiH, triggering concerns of renewed violence among non-Serb residents in Republika Srpska. In both instances, Republika Srpska implemented counterterrorism measures with the express purpose of intimidating Bosniak returnee refugees.[40]

Conclusion

The settlement of *mujahideen* fighters and the perceived "Islamisation" of BiH after the war are entangled with current narratives of terrorism within BiH. All terrorist activities within BiH are directly attributed to the participation and settlement of *mujahideen* fighters during the Bosnian War. This has led to the use of counterterrorism to perpetuate wartime grievances. This misuse of counterterrorism measures, particularly in a conflict or post-conflict state, is not unique to BiH. For example, at the beginning of the Syrian War, government officials drew on a narrative of terrorism to justify their use of violence against civilians. In Sri Lanka, the government is accused of using counter-terrorism measures implemented during the Sri Lankan War (1983-2009) to harass Tamil community members through detention without charge. These instances are not categorised as human rights abuses but are tacitly condoned and encouraged by the UN's own failure to define terrorism or monitor their prevention. In the case of BiH, unless there is greater involvement by the international community, Republika Srpska will continue to be able to use the excuse of counterterrorism to target and harass members of the Bosniak community.

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[39] The river Drina is the natural border between Serbia and BiH. During the war, the river played a significant role in the disposal of bodies by Serb forces.

[40] Alix Culbertson, "Serbia Carries out 'anti-Terrorist' Exercise with Military," *Express*, n.d.; Danijel Kovacevic, "Police Exercise Adds to Bosnia's Pre-Election Jitters," *Balkan Insight*, 26 August, 2016, http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/police-exercise-adds-to-bosnia-s-pre-election-jitters-08-29-2016; Associated Press, "Serbia, Bosnian Serbs Hold Joint Anti-Terrorism Drill," *Mail Online*, 28 August, 2016, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/~/article-3762276/index.html.

Research Section

The Quest for Islam in a Virtual Maze: How the Internet is Shaping Religious Knowledge among Young Muslims in Berlin-Kreuzberg

Ines Gassal-Bosch

This article employs empirical investigation collected among young Muslims in Kreuzberg, Berlin, to study the use of the Internet as a source to approach and access Islam. Beyond common generalisations of the Internet as a source of radicalisation, this study argues for the selective and critical usage of the Internet to obtain knowledge about Islam, underscoring the agency of young Muslims.

The Internet has emerged as an important repository of information for the current cohort of German adolescents, yet existing literature largely ignores its role in shaping Islamic religiosity. Thinking of the Internet as a maze enables us to conceptualise the virtual quest for Islamic knowledge as a flexible itinerary: instead of guiding religious education along a fixed route to a set destination, the Internet allows for alternative paths and individual choices. To the digital maze-walker, the Internet presents a contested territory, where opposite camps are continuously engaged in the (re)formulation of Islam. How do young Muslims navigate the Internet's confusing information landscape, and how does the Internet shape their interpretations of Islam? Why do young Muslims seek religious advice online, and with what consequences? It is with a view to delving into such questions that this study undertakes an empirical investigation into Internet usage among young Muslims raised in Berlin's inner-city district of Kreuzberg. The purpose of this article is to gain a better understanding of the ways in which the Internet feeds into the dynamics of religious transformation, frequently subsumed under the term individualisation. These transformations elude the broad strokes of the radicalisation narratives that have come to be associated in popular imagination with the virtual realm. The Internet rather remolds Islam in diverse and much more subtle ways that have to be evaluated in a contextually rich manner. The research interest of this study lies in examining these manifold transformations through an exploration of the motives, patterns, religious implications, and broader political effects of Internet usage among grammar school finalists in Berlin-Kreuzberg.

Background of the Study

Existing literature observes how German-raised Muslims tend to develop their religious heritage in ways that lead to highly dissimilar interpretations

of Islam.[1] Scholarly analyses describe this phenomenon as individualisation and identify it as the prevalent dynamic of Islam in Europe.[2] Despite somehow different perceptions of what constitutes this dynamic, individualisation is here understood as comprising the following trends: a de-culturalization of Islam, an eclecticism of religious practice, and the growing autonomy of the individual in interpreting Islam.[3] How the individualized forms of Islamic knowledge are acquired is the underlying consideration. Much has been written on the decline in influence of traditional modes of Islamic education, and much less on the new purveyors of religious knowledge. Little thought has been given to the sources tapped and the authorities sought out by young Muslims in reformulating their Islamic beliefs. Recently, scholars have speculated that the Internet may have emerged as the main source of religious knowledge among the current cohort of young adults.[4] Nevertheless, the Internet's impact on individuals' religiosity has received little empirical attention. This study represents an effort to address this gap. Understanding how the Internet is shaping young individuals' conceptions of religious truths holds the key to evaluating the web's potential as a site where the future of Islam will be shaped. Familiarity with the Internet's transformative potentials will enable us to move beyond popular generalisations that frame young Muslims as easily susceptible to the Internet's unparalleled influence, while allowing us to clarify the circumstances under which the Internet can change individuals' religiosity.

Research Questions

My research focus on the Internet as a source of Islamic knowledge can be classified into four areas of inquiry concerned with the motives, patterns, transformative effects, and broader political implications of Internet usage for religious matters. Thus, the following research questions guide this investigation: Why do the study participants use the Internet as a source of religious content? How do they use religious content found online? What role does the Internet play in the transformation of Islamic knowledge? What are the political implications of Internet usage as a source of Islamic knowledge?

This study gives primary consideration to the third research question of how the Internet is transforming Islamic knowledge among young Muslims in Berlin. However, Internet usage patterns and motives are mediators of the effects that the Internet can

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[1] Relevant studies include: Hans-Jürgen von Wensierski, "Jugendphase und Jugendkultur von Muslimen in Deutschland," in *Jugend: Theoriediskurse und Forschungsfelder*, eds. Sabine Sandring, Werner Helsper, and Hans-Hermann Krüger (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2010); Jeanette S. Jouili, "Re-fashioning the Self through Religious Knowledge: How Muslim Women Become Pious in the German Diaspora," in *Islam and Muslims in Germany*, eds. Ala al-Hamarneh and Jörn Thielmann (Boston: Brill, 2008).
[2] Ibid.
[3] Mark Sedgwick, ed., *Making European Muslims: Religious Socialization Among Young Muslims in Scandinavia and Western Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 2.
[4] Michael R. Levenson, Carolyn M. Aldwin, and Heidi Igarashi, "Religious Development from Adolescence to Middle Adulthood," in *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, Second Edition, eds. Crystal L. Park and Raymond F. Paloutzian (New York: Guilford Publications, 2013).

have on Islamic knowledge and merit investigation. By usage patterns, I refer to the criteria according to which young Muslims evaluate the worth of online representations of Islam, as well as the extent to which the Internet is used as a wellspring of religious guidance, especially in relation to other methods of Islamic knowledge acquisition. Furthermore, the Internet's transformative impact on Islamic knowledge has political implications that warrant attention. Considered together, these four research questions probe different aspects of the phenomenon under study and will guide us throughout this article. These questions have been developed from the knowledge gaps identified in the existing literature and will be answered on an empirical basis.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework
It is necessary to specify briefly the theoretical framework and key analytical concepts guiding this study. I follow the definition of Islamic knowledge as referring to whatever Muslims regard as constituting correct belief and practice.[5] What makes a belief or practice Islamic is "not necessarily its congruence with some broadly accepted standard of orthodoxy but its reference to the ongoing series of debates that constitute Islam as a living tradition."[6] The notion of Islam as a dynamic tradition goes back to Talal Asad, who suggested we look at the ways in which Islam is subjected to diverse interpretations.[7] Asad's understanding of tradition may be usefully broadened to include discursive, as well as non-discursive elements.[8] As part of a heterogenous tradition, Islamic knowledge is inherently contested, continually refracted by the prism of local customs and individual cognition, from which it emerges as a varicoloured spectrum of interpretations that can be in competition with, or even antagonistic to, one another.[9] In other words, religious knowledge is here defined not as an a priori system of meaning, but from a constructivist perspective. A constructivist approach calls into question the human capacity for knowledge as primed to uncover the world's essence and, instead, focuses on the ways in which religious knowledge is constructed through conventions, human perception, and social experience.[10]

Conceiving of Islamic knowledge as amenable to individuals' interpretations, this study ventures into an exploration of the forces shaping adolescents' religiosity. In theoretical terms, my understanding of these forces draws on the intersection between socialisation theories and psychological views of religious development. Taken together, these theories provide a more comprehensive account of how adolescents' emerging abstract reasoning skills stimulate, albeit in varying ways and to varying degrees, a critical

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[5] Martin van Bruinessen and Stefano Allievi, *Producing Islamic Knowledge: Transmission and Dissemination in Western Europe* (London: Routledge, 2011), 1.

[6] Ibid., 2.

[7] Michael Farquhar, *Circuits of Faith: Migration, Education, and the Wahhabi Mission* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 5.

[8] Allievi and Bruinessen, *Producing Islamic Knowledge*, 1.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2009), 76.

questioning of traditional agents of religious socialisation.[11] Starting in adolescents, agents of religious socialisation turn into what could be more appropriately called sources of religious knowledge. The latter expression is not an explicit conceptual model in research literature, but is used here to posit a more open relationship between the sender and receiver of religious messages. This article advances a theoretical framework that provides an understanding of young Muslims, not as passive recipients of religious messages, but as active agents with their own values and opinions, reinterpreting online content in light of information derived from various sources.

My research population consists of grammar school finalists, aged 18 to 19, for it is at about this age that theories of religious development locate a shift towards a more autonomous faith.[12] According to Fowler, this developmental shift occurs as the individual moves from what he called the "synthetic-conventional" to the "individuative-reflective" faith stage.[13] At the "synthetic-conventional" stage, beliefs are unquestionably inherited, while "individuative-reflective" faith involves the critical reexamination of life-guiding values.[14] It is then that the Internet is likely to be sought out as a source of information in the development of new forms of Islamic knowledge. In contrast to other potential sources of religious guidance, the Internet is "a space of relative autonomy for the youth, a space where they can engage in learning […] largely outside the purview of teachers, parents, and other adults who have authority over them."[15] The youth's emerging desire for independence, self-reliance, and freedom from parental authority is likely to turn the Internet into an attractive tool of religious self-instruction.

Research Design and Findings

This study employs a mixed method approach, which embeds quantitative data collection and analysis within a primary qualitative study design. The intention behind using different sets of data is to explore individuals' subjective engagement with online representations of Islam, in addition to identifying patterns of Internet use and interrelationships between variables in my sample. The data collection methods adopted for this study consist of surveys and focus group interviews. A total of 94 Muslim grammar school finalists completed the survey questionnaires, while two single-sex focus group interviews were held with three male and three female respondents, respectively.

The starting point for this study was the theoretical assumption that, in emerging adulthood, individuals develop an "individuative-reflective" faith, which prompts them to question inherited beliefs and seek new forms of Islamic knowledge online. However,

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[11] W. Hood, Jr., Peter C. Hill, and Bernard Spilka, eds., *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*, 4th ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2009), 106.

[12] Hood, *Psychology of Religion*, 126.

[13] Micha Brumlik, "Jugend, Religion und Islam," in *Kindheit und Jugend in Muslimischen Lebenswelten: Aufwachsen und Bildung in Deutscher und Internationaler Perspektive*, eds. Christine Hunner-Kreisel et al. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010), 39.

[14] Ibid.

[15] S. Weber and S. Dixon, *Growing Up Online: Young People and Digital Technologies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 230.

only 26 percent of my study participants (referred to as Group I) showed signs suggestive of an "individuative-reflective" faith. Typically, individuals in this group would seldom agree with parents, siblings, or friends on religious matters.[16] Moreover, they reported that they saw themselves as only partially or marginally influenced by traditional sources of religious guidance.[17] They also admitted to having doubted, or changed, some of the norms and values they were born into.[18] The remaining 74 percent of my study participants (Group II) displayed attitudes rather typical of the "synthetic-conventional" faith stage, marked by strong reliance on the religious guidance of traditional authority figures, including first and foremost, parents, but also peers (siblings and friends).[19] Typically, these participants reported that they always shared their parents' opinions on religious issues, often identifying various family members as their religious role models.[20] On the basis of their displayed reliance on, or departure from, inherited beliefs, I split my participants into two groups, roughly corresponding to Fowler's faith stages three and four, respectively. Admittedly, the classification of my survey respondents into two groups was not always straightforward, and it simplified empirical reality insofar as individuals are not locked into fixed, mutually exclusive faith stages, but tend to move along a continuum of spirituality.[21] Nevertheless, major differences could be detected between Group I and II with respect to their Internet usage motives and patterns.

Internet Usage Motives
My first research question seeks to ascertain why my study participants engage with religious content online. A surprisingly wide variety of Internet usage motives could be uncovered, which can be clustered around three primary dimensions, namely goal-oriented information seeking, entertainment, and social interaction.[22] This variety – with regard to both the number of motives and variations on a single motive – implies that individual differences outweigh gender-specific commonalities frequently enough to preclude significant correlations. Most important to our present purpose, however, is to understand the major motivational differences between Group I and II, as they provide the root cause of the varying effects the Internet has on Islamic knowledge in both groups.

The most common answer (selected by a total of 69 percent of participants) from the list of motivational factors relates to the fast access to religious information afforded

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[16] Results yielded by responses to survey question 4 (Berlin: 2017).
[17] Results yielded by responses to survey question 2 (Berlin: 2017).
[18] Results yielded by responses to survey question 6, and discussions in focus group 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).
[19] Results yielded by responses to survey question 1, 2, and 4, and discussions in focus groups 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).
[20] Results yielded by responses to survey question 2 and 3 (Berlin: 2017).
[21] Hood, *Psychology of Religion*, 126.
[22] These three dimensions are borrowed as structuring categories from relevant literature on uses and gratification theories, including: James A. Anderson, *Communication Theory: Epistemological Foundations* (London: Guilford Press, 1996), 212.

by the Internet in the individual's pursuit of moral cultivation.[23] Moreover, 17 percent of my survey respondents turn to the Internet in order to research religious issues that cannot be discussed with parents or imams due to their taboo nature.[24] Beyond these two factors, information needs start to differ between Group I and II.

Numerous survey respondents in Group I described the Internet as a superior source of religious orientation.[25] This perceived superiority was explained in a variety of ways but often related to one of the three dimensions of individualization, formerly defined as a "de-culturalization of Islam, an eclecticism of religious practice, and the growing autonomy of the individual in interpreting Islam."[26] Several survey participants explained their use of the Internet with reference to the insufficiency of traditional sources of Islamic orientation. For instance, they complained that local imams neglected issues of high relevance to them, or pointed to the language barriers that prevented them from individual engagement with the Quran.[27] Consequently, their turn to the Internet was motivated by the wish to explore religious issues that really mattered to them, in a language that they could easily understand, and through sources untainted by their parents' local traditions.[28]

Among those who actively rejected the teachings of their family, the choice to turn to the Internet was not only determined by the quest for alternative, de-culturalised interpretations of Islam, but also by the empowering potential of religious knowledge acquired online.[29] This empowering potential may be usefully understood with reference to Bradfort Verter's conception of religious knowledge as an embodied form of spiritual capital within a competitive symbolic economy.[30] Within this economy, individuals occupy positions of relative strength or weakness by virtue of the spiritual capital they possess (though the value of any form of spiritual capital is subject to contestation).[31] Religious knowledge acquired in cyberspace offers spiritual capital that is of particular use within struggles over the correct interpretation of Islam.[32] Such struggles – with parents or (non-)Muslim peers – were likely to emerge at the cultural fault lines running through my interviewees' everyday lives. For instance, one interviewee related how he wanted to get a pet dog and turned to the Internet in the hope to find religious arguments to convince his father. He pointed to the fact that Quranic knowledge generally afforded

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[23] Results yielded by responses to survey question 7 (Berlin: 2017).

[24] Ibid.

[25] Result yielded by open-ended responses to survey question 7, and discussions in focus groups 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[26] Sedgwick, ed., *Making European Muslims*, 2.

[27] Result yielded by open-ended responses to survey question 7, and discussions in focus groups 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[28] Result yielded by open-ended responses to survey question 7, and discussions in focus groups 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[29] Results yielded by focus group discussions (Berlin: 2017).

[30] Farquhar, *Circuits of Faith*, 11.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

him with greater persuasiveness in disputation over correct Islamic practices within his family.[33] Another interviewee recalled how he was trying to argue against his parents' denouncement of playing chess with the help of arguments found online. He equally conceived of religious arguments as the only way to challenge what he perceived as a coercive grip of culturally based norms remote from the Quran's actual teachings.[34] Thus, my study participants went online not only to research their own conclusions on matters pertaining to Islam, but also to obtain spiritual capital, which enabled them to negotiate their individualised understanding of Islam within families.

Religious capital is not only a valuable resource at home, but it can also be widely used within the local Muslim community. One study participant, for example, framed her concern for peer recognition as a motive behind her online quest for religious knowledge. She recalled how her friends were once debating the question of whether a person's place in paradise and hell was predetermined. Ignorant of Quranic teachings on these issues, she used online resources to remedy her lack of knowledge and to develop a personal standpoint on various religious issues that she could then share with her friends in the hope of winning their recognition. Thus, she tried to reconcile her experience of social interaction with her own self-conception as a knowledgeable Muslim by acquiring spiritual capital online.[35]

Alongside being a valued repository of de-culturalised forms of Islamic knowledge, the Internet is appreciated for the unrestricted freedom with which users can draw upon multiple traditions and ideas in constructing an Islam appropriate to their needs. Interviewee 1 argued that the Internet enabled her to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of her religious tradition by providing a window to diverse perspectives on Islam.[36] Interviewee 5 simply valued the autonomy with which he could choose whatever religious ideas he deemed most convincing online.[37] Furthermore, several respondents indicated that they turned to the Internet for information capable of legitimising their lifestyle choices which were not inherently associated with Islam.[38] This finding resonates with the analyses of Eickelman and Anderson, who note that an increasingly "large number of Muslims explain their goals in terms of the normative language of Islam."[39] One study participant, for example, cited several online-researched Quranic verses and hadiths – including Surah al-Nahl, verse 49, or Surah al-A'raf, verse 31 – that she would reference in justifying her vegetarian diet within her family, and in convincing others that vegetarianism was part of the lifestyle guidelines recommended

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[33] Answers obtained from interviewee 4 in focus group 2 (Berlin: 2017).
[34] Answers obtained from interviewee 5 in focus group 2 (Berlin: 2017).
[35] Answers obtained from interviewee 2 in focus group 1 (Berlin: 2017).
[36] Answers obtained from interviewee 1 in focus group 1 (Berlin: 2017).
[37] Answers obtained from interviewee 5 in focus group 2 (Berlin: 2017).
[38] Result yielded by open-ended responses to survey question 7 (Berlin: 2017).
[39] Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1.

by the Quran.[40] As Islam is blended so seamlessly with other dimensions of life, a clear-cut distinction between religious and non-religious motives is not always possible, for my study participants seem to "act not just as Muslims but [...] from all diverse motives that characterise human endeavor."[41]

By way of comparison, the motives predominant among participants in Group II were not so much related to the quest for alternative directions as to the wish to gain deeper understanding and confirmatory evidence for inherited beliefs.[42] At home, at school, and in their neighbourhood streets, many of my respondents felt the pressure to justify inherited beliefs that they hold dear. As one of my Alevi survey respondents noted, the Internet offers suitable argumentative tools to communicate one's inherited beliefs not only to the non-Muslim surroundings, but also to other Muslims holding different beliefs.[43] Furthermore, many survey respondents in Group II reported having used the Internet as an avenue of communication with other Muslims, rather than as a research space.[44] Many of them simply enjoyed conversing about Islam with friends on social networks, building digital connections to people they knew from their offline Muslim communities.[45] Sometimes, they searched in cyberspace for virtual communities that were more in line with their personal beliefs or spiritual interests than the communities found in their physical proximity. For instance, one interviewee remarked how she sought to develop via virtual communities a greater appreciation of her Shia heritage than she could ever find in her predominantly Sunni environment at school.[46]

Beyond information needs, further motivations for using the Internet were related to its provision of an entertaining access to Islamic knowledge. In the surveys, the second highest rating was for the statement, "I use the Internet because it provides an entertaining access to religious content."[47] The revealed salience of entertainment aligns with general research done on Internet usage motives.[48] Its specific meaning in relation to Islamic knowledge, however, had to be further explored in the focus group discussions. My interviewees explained the various ways in which religious instruction and entertainment intersect in cyberspace. Watching spiritually uplifting videos (about, for example, the hajj) was perceived as, at once, recreational and morally instructive.[49] The motive to be entertained led many of my interviewees to seek out online-based preachers on the basis of their entertainment value (such as the humour or dramatic

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[40] Answers obtained from interviewee 1 in focus group 1 (Berlin: 2017).

[41] Ibid.

[42] Result yielded by responses to survey question 7, and focus group discussions 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[43] Result yielded by open-ended responses to survey question 7 (Berlin: 2017).

[44] Results yielded by responses to survey question 7, and discussions in focus groups 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[45] Ibid.

[46] Answers obtained from interviewee 3 in focus group 1 (Berlin: 2017).

[47] Result yielded by responses to survey question 7 (Berlin: 2017).

[48] Tilo Hartmann, *Media Choice: A Theoretical and Empirical Overview* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2009), 61.

[49] Results yielded by discussions in focus groups 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).

effect they incorporated into their speeches).[50] Among them was Abdul Adhim Kamouss, who is renowned for his highly evocative and entertaining preaching style, pervaded by theatrical outbursts of emotions and exaggerated gestures used to comic effect.[51] In general, the motive to be entertained was accompanied by a preference for Islamic knowledge as represented and enacted in short YouTube videos, enabling users to absorb crucial information in a short amount of time.[52] The entertainment dimension of many cited Islamic websites reaches into the polymorphic worlds of popular entertainment, including Islamic fashion sites or religiously inspired music by, for instance, Sami Yusuf.[53] The entertainment motive can also take precedence over the desire to find out more about Islam. One interviewee confessed that he used to visit websites of radical preachers for pure curiosity and entertainment, but soon became bored of them once the novelty factor wore off.[54]

Equally striking was the participants' use of the Internet as a means to influence and reclaim contemporary discourses on Islam. In both groups, survey respondents indicated that they used the Internet as a space to challenge Islamophobic narratives and undermine radical Islamist propaganda.[55] Some of them purposefully draw on the Internet's expressive possibilities to raise awareness about what they perceived as the real message of Islam.[56] In cyberspace, they could pursue this intention on a much larger scale than within individual acts of dialogue in offline contexts. Sometimes, my respondents did not actively seek to engage in religious debates, but encountered online depictions of Islam that struck them as being defamatory or divergent. Provoked by these statements, they used the respective commentary functions embedded in social networks or on news websites to present their own standpoint on Islam.[57]

Internet Usage Patterns

My second research question seeks to explore how my study participants engage with online representations of Islam. In particular, it inquires into the role the Internet plays in comparison to other sources of Islamic knowledge. Furthermore, it aims to shed light on the criteria that my study participants use to judge the credibility of web-based resources. My research findings suggest that the relation between online and offline repositories of religious information is, to a large degree, marked by complementarity. Still, elements of competition exist, yielding insight into the dialectical complexities of

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[50] Ibid.
[51] Results obtained from interviewee 4 and 5 in focus group 2 (Berlin: 2017).
[52] Results yielded by discussions in focus groups 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).
[53] Answers obtained from interviewee 2 in focus group 1 and interviewee 5 in focus group 2 (Berlin: 2017).
[54] Answers obtained from interviewee 5 in focus group 2 (Berlin: 2017).
[55] Results yielded by open-ended answers to survey question 7, and focus group discussions (Berlin: 2017).
[56] Results yielded by open-ended answers to survey question 7 (Berlin: 2017).
[57] Ibid.

the relationship between real and virtual spaces. In seeking Islamic knowledge online, my participants seem to be very unevenly equipped with the tools required to hack through the digital jungle of propaganda, conspiracy theories, and plain untruths.

On average, the Internet is the most frequently used repository of religious information, alongside parents, in both Group I and II.[58] As much as 93 percent of my informants reported to use the Internet in varying degrees as a source of religious information, 65 percent even indicated that they "always" or "often" turned to the Internet for religious answers.[59] Still, the average respondent sought information from interpersonal contexts (including parents and friends) almost as often as in cyberspace.[60] In addition, 62 percent of my female respondents regularly discussed their web-based explorations with parents, while 69 percent of my male respondents habitually shared their online discoveries with peers.[61] 22 percent of my female participants and 28 percent of my male respondents reported discussing online representations of Islam with other Muslims in the local mosque.[63] In fact, increased Internet usage correlates with higher use of interpersonal channels of religious information. This finding fits well with the observation of "channel complementarity" in other content areas, such as health care. Though channel complementarity prevailed among my survey respondents, its implications varied between study participants in Group I and II as a function of the above-described motives, insofar as the available data permits to draw a conclusive picture.

Among study participants in Group I, informational flows between online and offline spaces were often driven by a wish to cross-check, compare, or challenge traditional forms of Islamic knowledge with web-based information.[64] Particularly salient was the use of web-based information as spiritual capital with which to challenge parental interpretation of Islam (such as the prohibition to play chess or own a dog). Sometimes, however, my interlocutors discarded web-based information in light of what they have previously learnt about Islam in offline contexts.[65] Thus, complementarity assumed the form of mutual influence: offline discussions were informed by the religious insights obtained in the virtual realm, while the online quest for Islamic knowledge was guided by wider beliefs developed in offline interactions with other Muslims. This finding complicates the theoretical assumption that the Internet fosters an auto-didacticism that forgoes any sort of mediation.[66] Rather, Islamic knowledge circulates across online and offline domains of life, spanning a wide arena for negotiation of Islamic beliefs and practices.

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[58] Results yielded by responses to survey question 1 (Berlin: 2017).

[59] Results yielded by responses to survey question 1 (Berlin: 2017).

[60] Ibid.

[61] Results yielded by responses to survey question 5 (Berlin: 2017).

[62] Ibid.

[63] Roger Detels, Martin Gulliford, and Quarraisha Abdool Karim, ed. *Oxford Textbook of Global Public Health* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 395.

[64] Results yielded by responses to survey question 7, and focus group discussions 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[65] Ibid.

[66] Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 96.

Among the study participants in Group II, the complementary use of the Internet seemed to be mainly unidirectional in the sense that online information was used to gain a deeper understanding of cherished beliefs.[67] While almost half of the survey respondents in this group agreed with the statement that the Internet has provided them with a deeper understanding of Islam, hardly anyone reported that the Internet had changed, or made them doubt, inherited beliefs.[68] These findings resonate with Campbell's idea of a "multisite" reality, in which online practices serve as an extension of offline patterns of religiosity.[69] This is due to individuals' tendency to selectively expose themselves to messages that reflect their own ideological position, and screen out information contradicting entrenched personal views.[70] Of course, selective exposure does not preclude the possibility of stumbling across online content that refutes – or changes – personal opinions, but it minimises people's openness to new arguments.[71]

In both groups, complementarity also existed in the sense that different sources of Islamic knowledge served different needs. As one interviewee pointed out, her choice of a source of Islamic knowledge differed across various content areas, and as a function of her underlying motivations. For instance, she would go online to retrieve information on issues that she could not comfortably discuss with her parents. In other matters, however, she deemed parental advice much more reliable, and easier to retrieve, than the information available online.[72]

The majority of my survey respondents reported that they only occasionally turned to books for religious insights.[73] Online versions of the Quran seem to stand in a substitutional relationship with printed ones. Most of my interviewees reported that their reception of the Quran mainly took place in cyberspace and in German translation.[74] The question arises as to how the reception of Islam's scriptural sources is being refashioned as it shifts to online contexts. The Internet breaks the Quranic text up into searchable chunks, permeates it with hyperlinks, interactive elements, and multimedia applications. The ensuing cacophony of stimuli is likely to produce reception patterns radically different from the conventional reading experience as an in-depth and immersive activity. My interviewees reported to enjoy no such immersion, as their grappling with digital versions of the Quran seemed to be discontinuous, punctuated by jumps between different websites and snippets of text.[75] The Internet serves as a

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[67] Results yielded by responses to survey questions 6 and 7, and focus group discussions 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[68] Results yielded by responses to survey questions 6.

[69] Pauline Hope Cheong, "Authority," in *Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, ed. Heidi A. Campbell (New York: Routledge, 2013), 82.

[70] Roger J.R. Bobkowski, "Faith in the Digital Age: Emerging Adults' Religious Mosaics and Media Practices" in *Emerging Adults' Religiousness and Spirituality: Meaning-Making in an Age of Transition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 93.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Responses obtained from interviewee 2 in focus group 1 (Berlin: 2017).

[73] Result yielded by answers to question 1 (Berlin: 2017).

[74] Responses obtained from interviewee 2, 3, 4, and 5 (Berlin: 2017).

[75] Ibid.

conduit, not only for the Quran, but for even more media – such as radio and television – absorbing their religious socialising potential.[76]

So far, we have established that the Internet is an often-tapped source of religious information among my survey respondents. Whether it equally serves as a resource from which my study participants derive explicit spiritual guidance is another question. An analysis of my respondents' religious role models can provide some insights into the use of the Internet for spiritual orientation, rather than mere information provision. Just like a religious authority, a spiritual role model commands the confidence and respect of followers in matters related to religion. However, the concept of a role model denotes a more limited identification with an individual whose religious behaviour and values are adopted for emulation. The pre-test survey revealed that, unlike the notion of religious authority, the idea of a religious role model was much more comprehensible to my study participants, and thus it was chosen for further exploration in the actual survey. The survey uncovered a broad spectrum of religious role models, representing vastly different types of spiritual leaders in both groups. Of those respondents who identified a role model, 62 percent invoked a traditional source of religious orientation.[77] They either purported to follow the example set by a religious figure – such as the Prophet Muhammad, his daughter, or cousin – or they attributed a spiritual guiding function to a family member, friend, or imam from the local Muslim community. 36 percent indicated looking to somehow untraditional role models for spiritual guidance. These include various international preachers and scholars, in addition to sports and film stars, politicians, singers, YouTubers, and Instagram stars, as well as literary figures and philosophers.[80] By untraditional, I mean that these figures do not derive their authority from Islam's sacred tradition, and often have no formal religious qualifications or institutional positions. If they hold institutional positions, they are not part of the respondents' immediate environment so that interactions with them are always mediated across a physical distance – be it through online or offline media. Some of these perceived role models operate mainly in cyberspace, where they have been discovered by my respondents (see figure 1). Others tend to spread their teachings through offline media, but can still – and often are – searched online. This, again, is illustrative of the blurred boundaries between web-based and traditional sources of Islamic knowledge.

In the focus groups, there were heated debates over who could qualify as a spiritual role model. Some interviewees adopted a more conventional definition of a spiritual role model as someone who served as an example of how to live a virtuous Islamic life.[81] Others struggled to explain why they elevated film stars or football players – such as Shah Rukh

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[76] Bobkowski, "Faith in the Digital Age," 95.
[77] Results yielded by answers to survey questions 3a and 3b (Berlin: 2017).
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Answer obtained from interviewee 6 in focus group 2 (Berlin: 2017).

Khan or Moussa Sow – to exemplars of Islamic virtue. As several interviewees stressed, these stars simply represented to them the sort of Muslims they admired and wished to be, who achieved their goals and earned social recognition.[82] The appeal of figures such as Mustafa Baygül or Muhammad Ali seem to be tied to mechanisms of projection and collective identification, rather than to the precise contours of their religious roles. Enjoying status and respect due to their high profile in sports, these role models embody a collective ideal self in the eyes of their admirers. As members of an often negatively stereotyped group, my young Muslim interlocutors found an opportunity for positive collective identification in these stars.[83] The successful careers of Änis Ben-Hatira, a Berlin-born footballer of Tunisian origin, or Ottman Azaitar, a German-raised Muay Thai boxer with Moroccan roots, symbolise the possibilities that exist past the obstacles facing children of Muslim immigrants.[84] These role models enabled their admirers to develop a positive relationship to the socio-political category of "Muslim." Thus, they fulfilled a very different function to parents or imams, from whom my interlocutors could learn Islamic values and practices. Consequently, some interviewees reported to have several religious role models, from whom they expected guidance and inspiration with regard to different aspects of their lives.[85] Sometimes, these different types of spiritual role models operated on opposite ends of the online-offline spectrum.[86] This observation further illustrates existing relationships of complementarity between online and offline sources of Islamic knowledge.

Pursuing their quest for de-culturalised forms of Islamic knowledge, survey participants in Group I often identified Western-raised role models. These included Germany-based preachers (such as Abdul Adhim Kamouss and Hussain Leibner), but also American scholars and speakers (such as Hazma Yusuf and Nouman Ali Khan), offering lectures on religious issues pertinent to Islamic communities in the West.[87]

Conversely, respondents in Group II tended to identify role models anchored in their parents' countries of origin.[88] These included, for instance, Nihat Hatipoğlu, a Turkish television host of popular religious programs,[89] as well as Alparslan Türkeş, who founded the Turkish Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Haraket Partisi) in 1969.[90] Furthermore, a number of Shia clerics — such as al-Sistani and Kamal al-Haydari — were named by the Shia respondents in my sample.[91] Most likely, these role models were part of the ideological inheritance received from parents and grandparents. The

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[82] Answers obtained from interviewee 4 and 5 in focus group 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[83] Ibid.

[84] Answer obtained from interviewee 1 and 2 in focus group 1 (Berlin: 2017).

[85] Results yielded by responses to survey question 3 (Berlin: 2017).

[86] Ibid.

[87] Results yielded by answers to question 3, and the focus group discussions 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[88] Results yielded by answers to survey question 3 (Berlin: 2017).

[89] 473

[90] Özgür Mutlu Ulus, *The Army and the Radical Left in Turkey: Military Coups, Socialist Revolution and Kemalism* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 12.

[91] Results yielded by answers to survey question 3 (Berlin: 2017).

transnational sphere of influence of the cited role models, mainly sustained through digital communication technologies, further confirms the logic of complementarity, as offline religious authority is expanded, rather than weakened, by online practices.[92]

Trying to understand how the Internet is used in religious matters also requires us to look at how critically young Muslims engage with web-based information. Critical information literacy involves, above all, awareness of the constructed nature of texts and the ability to actively reflect on the trustworthiness of information.[93] Therefore, respondents were requested to indicate their criteria for assessing the believability of web-based information. Asked to choose from a list of possible answers, seven percent of study respondents indicated to draw on the help of traditional authorities (such as parents and imams) in steering a path through the digital information jungle.[94] A total of 12 percent reported to follow the views of peers on the trustworthiness of various websites.[95] Interestingly, roughly a fourth of my survey respondents admitted that they did not think much about credibility issues when surfing the Internet.[96]

A similarly mixed picture is yielded by responses to the open-ended survey question eight, and explanations which emerged from the focus group discussions. In both groups, there were respondents who proved to possess a repertoire of critical literacy skills that they brought to bear in judging online information. For instance, they looked to the credentials of a text's author to verify the trustworthiness of a source, or secured their judgement of online content by cross-checking information from different sources.[97] Some claimed that their default approach was to take all religious interpretations with a pinch of salt, as they considered them all to be potentially distorted by subjectivity or hidden political agendas.[98] On the other hand, a few study participants displayed concerns about the credibility of web-based information, but were unable to identify any indicators for information accuracy.[99] Others admitted that they rarely paused to question, much less verify, a website's trustworthiness.[100] In the broad middle of the spectrum were many who based their credibility judgments on superficial aspects, including the visual appeal of a website, or popularity criteria such as viewer and "Like" counts.[101] Here, we can observe the manifestation of the so-called "choice-bandwagon effect," occurring when individuals are drawn to online contents that are widely consumed by other users.[102] Sometimes, credibility judgments are based on intuitive

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[92] 79.

[93] S. Shyam Sundar, ed., *The Handbook of the Psychology of Communication Technology* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 446.

[94] Results yielded by responses to survey question 8 (Berlin: 2017).

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Results yielded by open-ended answers to survey question 8 (Berlin: 2017).

[98] Ibid.

[99] Results yielded by open-ended answers to survey question 8 and focus group discussions (Berlin: 2017).

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Alison Attrill and Chris Fullwood, eds., *Applied Cyberpsychology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 52.

gut feelings, or the perceived authenticity of all audiovisual material.[103] Numerous participants displayed the so-called heuristics confirmation bias, which denotes the tendency to regard information as credible if it confirms pre-existing beliefs.[104] Often, my interviewees took references to the Quran as evidence for claims, but struggled to explain how to avoid the obvious pitfalls of this strategy, namely the fact that Quranic verses can be juggled to fit various interpretations.[105] The tendency to choose online content in a rather superficial manner may be understood as a form of the widespread practice of "satisficing," referring to online information seekers who do not draw on all their cognitive capabilities to obtain optimal results, but seize on the first acceptable piece of information, using only a limited amount of their cognitive resources.[106] The practice of "satisficing" may also partly explain why respondents in Group I, who are supposed to have entered a more self-reflexive faith stage, do not display more developed critical literacy abilities in comparison to respondents in Group II. It has also been noted that the "individuative-reflective" faith stage, especially at such a young age, is primarily a stage of struggles for an individual identity and religiosity, differentiated from others; it does not denote a stage of wisdom, heightened insights, or better critical literacy skills.[107]

To summarise, the Internet is among the primary sources of religious information, but is mainly used in a complementary fashion to offline interpersonal channels of religious orientation. My research findings testify to the porous boundaries between on- and offline sites of Islamic knowledge acquisition. The virtual information landscape is no bounded space, but firmly embedded in the physical world where it informs, and is shaped, by offline sources of Islamic knowledge.

Internet Usage Effects
Paradoxically, despite the frequency with which the Internet is used as a source of religious information, the Internet's influence on individual beliefs has been judged as marginal or non-existent by the majority (74 percent) of the survey respondents.[108] While 93 percent of the respondents reported to use the Internet as a source of religious information, over half of the sample (52 percent) denied that the Internet had any effects on their religious beliefs.[109] Roughly a quarter (22 percent) of the participants felt marginally influenced by the Internet, whereas the remaining fourth of them either ascribed partial (16 percent) or strong (10 percent) influence to online sources of Islamic knowledge.[110] Even among the approximately third of respondents who "always" turned

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[103] Results yielded by open-ended answers to survey question 8 (Berlin: 2017).

[104] Sundar, ed., *Handbook of the Psychology of Communication Technology*, 453.

[105] Responses obtained from focus group discussions 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[106] Yair Amichai-Hamburger, *The Social Net: Understanding Our Online Behavior* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 259.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Results yielded by responses to survey question 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[109] Results yielded by responses to survey question 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[110] Results yielded by responses to survey question 2 (Berlin: 2017).

to the Internet for religious information, a majority believed that the Internet had exercised no or negligible influence on their religiosity.[111] Participants in both groups rated parents, mosques, grandparents, siblings, and friends as more influential than the Internet in shaping their beliefs, even if they less often turned to these sources for religious information.[112]

Marginal Internet effects are not surprising in Group II, where response patterns are suggestive of a predominantly selective Internet exposure, which may, at most, lead to a reinforcement of pre-existing beliefs, hardly perceptible to the individual.[113] For instance, one interviewee admitted that, when faced with convincing online content that contradicted her beliefs, she tended to draw on the help of parents in making sense of this contradiction. Such strong reliance on traditional sources of Islamic knowledge limits the scope of the Internet's potential influence.[115] Admittedly, mechanisms of selective exposure are not all-powerful, as Internet users will inevitably chance upon information that calls into doubt their own perspective.[116] However, they provide a plausible explanation for the limited Internet usage effects reported by the study participants.

In Group I, patterns in answering behaviour were somehow contradictory. A majority of survey respondents in this group agreed, albeit to varying degrees, with the statements that the Internet had made them doubt, or change, inherited beliefs.[117] However, numerous respondents who agreed with these statements also claimed that the Internet only marginally influenced their beliefs.[118] At first glance, these survey responses may seem contradictory and attributable to the common pitfalls of self-reporting, including imperfect recall and social desirability.[119] Admittedly, in light of the complex interplay between various sources of Islamic knowledge, identifying the factors that have most shaped one's religiosity proves difficult. Unlike media usage habits, media effects are harder to recognise, as they mainly occur unconsciously and over a longer time span.[120] More importantly, however, the focus group discussions revealed that the degree of influence the Internet radiates may appear different, depending on whether it is examined in its own right, or in comparison to the influence yielded by other sources of Islamic knowledge. As several of my interviewees explained, they felt that parents had shaped their core values and life orientations, while the Internet could only affect them in peripheral arenas (for instance, related to attitudes towards playing chess, owning dogs,

[111] Results yielded by responses to survey question 1 and 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[112] Results yielded by responses to survey question 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[113] Stanley Baran and Dennis Davis, eds., *Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, Ferment, and Future* (London: Thompson Learnin, 2003), 155.

[114] Answer obtained from interviewee 3 in focus group 1 (Berlin: 2017).

[115] Results yielded by responses to survey question 6 (Berlin: 2017).

[116] Ibid.

[117] Results yielded by responses to survey question 6 (Berlin: 2017).

[118] Ibid.

[119] David de Vaus, *Surveys in Social Research* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2008), 27.

[120] Bobkowski, "Faith in the Digital Age," 94.

or mix-sex friendships).[121] In illustrating this point, one of my interviewees compared Islam to a house inherited from parents, where one could shift around the furniture or partly replace it with items found online, but whatever could be acquired online, he stressed, remained a detail in comparison to the fundament that had been laid by his family.[122] This interviewee described individualization processes as being much more subtle compared to what is suggested by a large body of research literature on Western-raised Muslims. This may be due to the fact that this interviewee was a third-generation migrant. Unlike second-generation migrants, he was not separated from his German-socialised parents by the same wide cultural gap, and this facilitated processes of an intergenerational negotiation and synchronisation of world views.

But even the second-generation interviewees, who strongly disagreed with their parents' understanding of Islam, did not identify the Internet as the sole determinant of their religious reorientation. Interviewee 5 said that he doubted the logical pertinence of his parents' beliefs and had difficulties accepting their religious teachings, long before he turned to the Internet for religious answers. Through his friends and their families, he encountered interpretations of Islam widely different from his parents' "conservative views."[123] Thus, his circle of friends played a pivotal role in determining his receptivity to new religious ideas that he further explored in cyberspace. He spent several weeks chatting online with a self-proclaimed expert on Islamic matters, recommended by a Facebook friend. However, the answers gleaned from these chats did not resolve his questions to his satisfaction. Nor could the disembodied and faceless nature of online interactions compensate for his wish for deeper personal contacts and physical belonging to a community. Therefore, he sought out assistance from various imams, one of whom proved particularly helpful in advancing the crystallisation of his beliefs.[124] This narrative of an individual's religious odyssey is illustrative of the alternating forces – both online and offline – that shape spiritual trajectories. It further serves to highlight individuals' agency in resisting the influence of self-proclaimed Islamic experts encountered online. Individual agency, conjoint with the simultaneous use of various sources of Islamic knowledge, may limit the Internet's potential to profoundly change individuals' religiosity.

While being no omnipotent incubator of beliefs, the Internet proved a fruitful repository of individualised forms of Islam, especially among the study participants in Group I. As an environment, the Internet offers a pluralist spiritual marketplace where individuals can autonomously explore and select à la carte religious ideas[125] – including those at odds with the values they were born into. As mentioned before, this freedom provided a key motivation for Internet use among my survey respondents in Group I. The digital marketplace does not only yield a wealth of interpretative variants

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[121] Answers obtained from interviewee 4 and 5 in focus group 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[122] Answers obtained from interviewee 1 in focus group 1 (Berlin: 2017).

[123] Quotation by interviewee 5, translated from German (Berlin: 2017).

[124] Answers obtained from interviewee 5 in focus group 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[125] Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, eds., *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 23.

of Islam, but also offers access to a reservoir of symbols and ideas conventionally not associated with Islam. 67 percent of my survey respondents fully or partly agreed with the statement that the Internet has helped them to gain a deeper comprehension of other religions, which is indicative of their online engagement not only with their own but also with different spiritual traditions.[126] The ensuing creolisation of Islamic knowledge may reach well beyond established religious traditions into the realm of esotericism and popular culture.

Illustrative of such creolisation processes is one story related by interviewee 5, who recalled a YouTube video leaving a particularly deep impression on them.[127] This video summarised the core ideas espoused in the esoteric book "The Secret," written by Rhonda Byrne, in which the author argues that all desires and needs can be fulfilled by maintaining positive emotional states.[128] Inspired by this video, my interviewee incorporated into his personal spirituality the notion that happiness, as well as ethical life, are grounded on positive emotional states.[129]

Another form of bricolage can be found at the virtual crossroads of Islam and globalised popular culture. Interestingly, this bricolage even shined through the urban youth vernacular used by my interviewees. For example, in conveying the Prophet's extraordinary ability to communicate with the Angel Gabriel, one interviewee relied on comparisons ("like an alien from another star system")[130] that were clearly inspired by science fiction films. Furthermore, and driven by entertainment motives, my interviewees reported that they often consumed spiritually-inclined pop music. Cloaked in familiar words, images, and sounds derived from popular culture, they found the religious messages contained in these productions much more accessible and relevant than the often abstract preachings offered in local mosques. For instance, interviewee 5 explained how Sami Yusuf's song "Forgotten Promises" offered him a concrete example of how to apply the Islamic message in the contemporary world. This song was recorded in support of humanitarian interventions in the drought-hit Horn of Africa.[131] Its call for solidarity with the poor was perceived by my interviewee as much more powerful than any preaching he ever listened to in his local mosque.

As Gerlach notes, Islamic pop culture implies a "remix of life-styles,"[132] which may be usefully understood as a quest for distinct forms of representation that allow for a new sense of identity as Western Muslims. This "remix of life-styles" flourishes in the contact zones of cultures, where young Muslims negotiate their religious heritage and Western

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[126] Results yielded by responses to survey question 6 (Berlin: 2017).

[127] Answers obtained from interviewee 5 in focus group 2 (Berlin: 2017).

[128] Christopher Partridge, ed., *The Occult World* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 217.

[129] Quote by interviewee 5, translated from German (Berlin: 2017).

[130] Quote by interviewee 6, translated from German (Berlin: 2017).

[131] Sami Yusuf And WFP Join In Support For Drought-Stricken Horn Of Africa, https://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/singer-sami-yusuf-and-wfp-join-support-drought-stricken-horn-africa.

[132] Julia Gerlach, *Zwischen Pop und Dschihad: Muslimische Jugendliche in Deutschland* (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2013), 11.

traditions through a double act of differentiation.[133] This implies that, on the one hand, they appropriate Western youth culture, thus separating themselves from their parents' generation. At the same time, they subvert and reinvent the dominant youth culture by marrying it with Islamic symbols and texts.

Interviewee 1 provided a good illustration of the ways in which popular culture is used as a site of representation and negotiation of Muslim identity. She reported that she was quite interested in Islamic fashion websites. Beyond a general fascination with patterns, colours, and fabric, she displayed awareness of the fact that clothes communicate messages about people's socio-cultural identities. My interviewee deeply disagreed with the association the hijab evoked in the mainstream public, and sought ways to disturb these associations.[134] She reported not to use Islamic fashion websites as tools of orientation in the interpretation of the Islamic rules for women's dress, as she already had relatively fixed ideas about these rules. Rather, within these rules, she wanted to express her individuality and enact her gender role in a way that defied stereotypes, but was compatible with the values of Western youth culture, including self-confidence and individualism.

The individualization processes observed above may be aptly summarized by borrowing Stig Hjarvard's metaphors of conduit, language, and environment.[135] As a conduit for the delivery of content, the Internet extends the arena for negotiating Islamic beliefs well beyond established channels of religious authority. Secondly, the rules of expression idiosyncratic to the Internet open up unprecedented possibilities for eclectic combination of religious content. The montage of beliefs often transcends established religious boundaries to enter the realm of popular culture, where the participants in this study used fashion blogs or hip-hop as sites of negotiation between their Muslim identities and Western youth culture. Thirdly, as an environment, the Internet grants individuals more autonomy in their interpretation of Islamic beliefs and practices. Study participants in Group I readily embraced this autonomy, while respondents in Group II tended to draw on the help of traditional authority figures in their search for like-minded online sources. This reduced the possibility of individualization processes triggered online among participants in Group II.

The Internet's (Dis-)integrative Potentials
In my sample, individualisation (in Group I) and reinforcement (in Group II) have emerged as the main mechanisms through which the Internet shapes Islamic knowledge. With the public eye fixed upon online processes of Islamist radicalization, the political implications of both phenomena merit attention. The data gathered shows that Internet-induced individualization and reinforcement of Islamic beliefs per se present no determinist stranglehold on users' political views: while some of my study participants

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[133] Karen Struve, *Zur Aktualität von Homi K. Bhabha* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2013), 97.
[134] Answers obtained from interviewee 1 in focus group 1 (Berlin: 2017).
[135] Stig Hjarvard, *The Mediatization of Culture and Society* (London: Routledge, 2013), 106.

have constructively drawn on the Internet as a medium of cultural self-integration, others have retreated ever deeper into their religio-cultural enclaves in cyberspace.[136]

The pitfalls involved in the online quest for Islamic knowledge merit closer scrutiny, as understanding them is vital for countering the Internet's disintegrative potential. The Internet offers enhanced possibilities for uninformed information retrieval, and arbitrary interpretation of religious content.[137] The heterogenous and, at times, problematic nature of knowledge acquired online complicates accounts of individualization as a de-culturalisation of Islam fostering Muslims' integration into German society. Demonstrating deficits in religious foreknowledge, some of my study participants had difficulties judging whether questionable claims advanced online were justified in the light of Islam's scriptural sources and interpretative tradition. Similarly, the interpretation of online content was not always based on careful consideration of Islam's authoritative texts, but rather on personal intuition, or claims advanced by laymen.[138] Some of the YouTube preachers popular among my study participants were sought out on the basis of their entertainment value, offering very superficial explanations of Islamic principles, thus creating a wide interpretative latitude. This raises questions about the professional capacity of the web-based religious instructors sought out by some of the study participants.

Likewise, the reinforcing effects of Internet use are not unproblematic. As an echo chamber, the Internet plays an unprecedented role in the polarisation of pre-existing attitudes – be they Islamist, racist, homophobic, misogynist, or anti-Muslim.[139] It confines people in homogenous communities, in which the constant reaffirmation of one-sided views acts as a magnifying glass through which pre-existing prejudices, grievances, or radical predispositions are grossly amplified.[140] It is worth noting that the Internet's reinforcing effects are non-directional, and may as well consolidate positive attitudes that are conducive to social cohesion in a pluralist society. However, among numerous study participants, the specific architecture of online social networks played an instrumental role in exacerbating their feelings of exclusion and alienation from the rest of German society. Genuine integration, with the sense of acceptance and belonging attached to it, is the outcome of mutual rapprochement. However, many schools in Berlin are segregated along religious and ethnic lines and as such offer no such inclusive space that could create feelings of belonging amidst diversity: 77 percent of the survey respondents attended schools predominately frequented by children of Muslim immigrants; this homogenous offline environment found its virtual extension

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[136] This study explored the Internet's impact on the interviewees' attitudes towards three most commonly identified benchmarks for cultural integration that continuously resurface in German debates on integration: attitudes towards pluralism, gender equality, and the democratic polity.

[137] Jouili, "Re-Fashioning the Self through Religious Knowledge," 465.

[138] Results yielded by open-ended answers to survey question 8 and focus group discussions (Berlin: 2017).

[139] Andrew Chadwick and Philip N. Howard, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics* (London: Routledge, 2009), 151.

[140] Ibid.

on online social networks, reinforcing the existing sense of exclusion.[141] From a point of view concerned with migrant integration, my respondents' home district can be aptly described as what Doug Saunders called an "arrival city."[142] An "arrival city" denotes a transitional urban neighbourhood, which has one foot in the native village and one in the established city, thus offering its residents possibilities of entry into mainstream society but putting them also at risk of getting trapped in their ethnically homogenous enclaves.[143] As an echo chamber capable of cementing these enclaves, the Internet presents an additional obstacle blocking young Muslims from fully integrating into German society.

Conclusion

The overarching goal of this article has been to illuminate the hitherto-unexplored role of the Internet in shaping Islamic beliefs among grammar school finalists in Berlin-Kreuzberg. In so doing, it has sought to fill a gap in the existing research literature, which largely ignores the questions of why, how, and with which consequences, young Muslims explore Islam online. This study has been a foray into uncovering the empirical realities of these neglected questions. Its main value lies in an empirical contribution to the theoretical debate over the Internet's role in the individualisation of Islamic knowledge. Among the majority of my 94 study participants, the Internet plays no key role in the transformation of Islamic knowledge, as its use is largely influenced by offline social networks. However, a still significant minority – nearly one-third of my sample – variously uses the virtual realm as a well of individualised forms of Islamic knowledge. On the basis of detected patterns in quantitative data, a typology of two categories of Internet users has been suggested in order to shed light on the circumstances under which the Internet may have a transformative impact on individuals' beliefs. The qualitative material of this article has illustrated specific manifestations of Internet-triggered individualization, with the intent of revealing new facets of this much-discussed phenomenon. I hope to have presented empirical material in a way in which the uneven and, at times, problematic nature of Internet-driven individualisation becomes apparent. This was meant to complicate prevalent accounts of individualization as a unidirectional – and often highly intellectualised – de-culturalization of inherited beliefs.[144] One key conclusion from this analysis is that the Internet has emerged as a conflicting source of individualised forms of Islamic knowledge. Therefore, it is imperative to focus more closely on providing the right pedagogical tools to deal with this new virtual reality. This conclusion draws together this study's key findings, and considers their broader significance in providing new perspectives for policy within the current debate the Internet's potentials and pitfalls.

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[141] Four out of six interviewees had hardly any non-Muslim friends, or friends without a migration background, in their online and offline social networks.

[142] Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History Is Reshaping Our World* (London: William Heinemann, 2010).

[143] Ibid.

[144] Jouili, "Re-Fashioning the Self through Religious Knowledge," 470-473.

To summarise the above findings into a coherent picture: among 26 percent of the sample (Group I), Internet usage motives were largely predictive of user preferences for online content that rethinks Islam in the light of the European context, or that offers users the possibility of autonomously selecting religious ideas. In Group II (over two-thirds of the sample) little evidence could be found for the motive to acquire individualised forms of Islamic knowledge online. Instead, motivations for using the Internet were predominantly related to its provision of an entertaining, fast, and interactive access to Islamic knowledge, rather than a quest for alternative directions. Whatever the underlying motivation, all study participants sought out the Internet as a primary channel of Islam-related content. In so doing, they used the Internet as a complement to – rather than a substitute for – offline channels of Islamic knowledge. In Group II, this channel complementarity tended to be unidirectional in the sense that the use of the Internet was largely conditioned by already-held beliefs. In Group I, informational flows between online and offline spaces were reciprocal to a larger degree, driven by a wish to compare or challenge traditional forms of Islamic knowledge with web-based insights. As the use of the Internet by my study participants varied, so did its impact on their understanding of Islam. In the majority of cases (Group II), the Internet's role in shaping individuals' beliefs was subordinate to influences of traditional authority figures, notably parents. In this group, the Internet is likely to lead to a reinforcement of inherited beliefs. Though not an omnipotent incubator of beliefs, the Internet proved, in varying and often subtle ways, a fruitful repository of individualised forms of Islam in Group I. Of course, and just as any other behaviour taxonomy, the classification of my study participants into types involves a simplification of empirical reality. This means that my study participants do not always fit neatly into a particular type but only approximate it to varying degrees.

Without making a claim for completeness or representativeness, this study's findings have illustrated two important mechanisms – individualization and reinforcement – through which the Internet may shape knowledge of Islam. Familiarity with the pitfalls of both mechanisms is vital for addressing the challenges of the online repository of Islamic knowledge. As an echo chamber, the Internet may accelerate disintegrative tendencies, since it creates an ideologically homogeneous environment that cocoons individuals from divergent perspectives.[145] In this cocoon, the constant reaffirmation of one-sided views creates powerful information cascades that amplify individuals' grievances, or prejudices, pushing them in increasingly polarised directions.[146] Similarly, the Internet-driven individualization of Islamic knowledge is not without risk, as it offers enhanced possibilities for uninformed information retrieval, and arbitrary interpretation of religious content.

In counteracting echo chambers of potentially dangerous ideas, there is a heightened imperative to provide spaces within school curricula for students to advance their religious thinking to a stage where they can reflect critically on their beliefs, instead

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[145] David Stevens and Kieron O'Hara, *The Devil's Long Tail: Religious and Other Radicals in the Internet Marketplace* (London: Hurst & Company, 2015), 72.
[146] Chadwick and Howard, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics*, 151.

of unquestioningly adopting those prevalent in their reference groups or physical proximity. Schools can be re-appropriated as spaces to encourage students to overcome cognitive blinkers that dull critical thinking (such as selective exposure) and to learn how to engage with the Internet in a search for meaning rather than confirmation.

In order to meet the challenges posed by young Muslims' online search for individualized forms of Islamic knowledge, efforts will have to be directed at ensuring that young people are equipped with the critical literacy skills necessary to sort through the bewildering thicket of digital data, information, and opinions. Training students in the critical use of web-based resources might, however, not be enough to equip them with a reflexive attitude to their religious heritage, capable of shielding them from questionable influences. Such an attitude requires profound knowledge of the Islamic tradition and its scriptural sources, in the light of which interpretations of Islam can be adequately examined. Neither in the mosque nor at school did my respondents feel sufficiently supplied with knowledge about religious matters pertinent to their daily lives in Berlin. Consequently, they sought out the Internet as a space to navigate between the norms of different cultural frameworks. Sorting through the online repository of competing interpretations is an enormous challenge for any individual. Schools and local mosques could – much more successfully than the Internet – assist young Muslims with the value negotiations at heart of their integration efforts.

In conclusion, and to return to the initial metaphor, there are two types of virtual maze walkers. The first one embarks on an autonomous exploration of the virtual storehouse of religious ideas, acquiring individualized forms of Islamic knowledge. However, lacking navigational tools, this type is at constant risk of getting lost in the Internet's darker passages. The second type of believer looks for maps in offline contexts in manoeuvring through the digital maze of religious information. Following the course signposted by parents and peers, this type may easily get trapped in virtual echo chambers. In either case, further navigation support – at schools and mosques – will be needed in order to enable young Muslims to use the online repository of religious information constructively.

Arab, Unionist, Republican: The Case of Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfī

Chris Hitchcock

This essay explores the works of the poet Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfī to uncover political allegiances and identities during the late Ottoman period. By using literary sources for historical inquiry, this study contributes to literature critical on Ottoman historiography and reveals intersections and negotiations between seemingly contradictory political and national identities such as unionist and republican, and Ottoman and Arab.

The poet Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfī[1] (1876-1945) is perhaps best remembered today as one of the defining influences in the cultural scene of the newly independent Hashemite Iraq. However, whilst much of his prodigious literary output was produced after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, al-Ruṣāfī was born and raised an Ottoman, and some of his most famous poems were written in critique of late Ottoman despotism. Despite some Arabist sympathies, he remained a staunch Unionist until the Ottoman collapse, and his political career in Hashemite Iraq was effectively torpedoed as a result, leaving him isolated. As such, he cuts an unexpected figure against the background of a period generally understood as characterised by deep ethnic cleavages in political life. He also represents an even more unusual political trend: in some of his poems, al-Ruṣāfī advocates explicitly for a republican government, placing him on the radical fringe of Ottoman opposition.

There is a rich debate in the existing literature over the intellectual origins and social base of Arab nationalism in the late Ottoman Empire – and by extension its antithesis, Arab Ottomanism.[2] The historian Ernest Dawn was one of the first to critically examine the nationalist narrative, suggesting that the majority of Ottoman Arabs continued to be Ottomanists until the Empire was dismembered in the aftermath of the First World War.[3] Hasan Kayalı's detailed study of relations between the late Ottoman state and its Arab subjects comes to a similar conclusion, asserting that Arabism did not develop into

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[1] Transliteration of Arabic follows the Library of Congress standard. Transliteration of Turkish follows the established convention of using modern Turkish spelling. All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

[2] Ottomanism is defined briefly by Erik Zürcher as "a union of the [Empire's] different communities around the Ottoman throne," the idea that "all subjects, irrespective of creed or language, would become loyal citizens with equal rights in the new [post-1908] constitutional state." Through a framework of cosmopolitanism, it incorporated the existing and developing cultural nationalisms of the Empire into an umbrella nationalism focused on the imperial state. Erik Zürcher, *Turkey, A Modern History* (London: IB Tauris, 2003), 127-128.

[3] Ernest Dawn, "The Formation of Pan-Arab Ideology in the Interwar Years," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20, no. 1 (1988): 68.

territorial nationalism until 1918.[4] Rashid Khalidi, contesting this revisionist position, has noted more recent work emphasising the strong Turkish nationalist position of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), and displays evidence from diplomatic correspondence that shows a strong nationalist bent.[5]

Regardless of the specific positions of these accounts on the relative numbers of Arabists and Ottomanists among the Arabic-speaking population of the late Ottoman Empire, none give us significant insight into the people behind the numbers. Although an intellectual history pinning down individuals who articulated their views in writing is a very different thing from a social history of late Arab Ottomanism, which would be a much more ambitious endeavour, an examination of some of the Arab ideologues of Ottomanism can provide us with some interesting insights. Al-Ruṣāfī is one such individual.

Late Ottoman Arabic poetry

Despite the prominent place that poetry has occupied in Arabic cultural and social life, the poetry of the post-medieval period, in general, has received relatively little historical attention. The post-classical section of one collection on Arabic poetry and history provides only literary readings of twentieth-century poems and no reference to the early modern period.[6] The late Ottoman period has received some attention from literary historians, but they have generally been concerned with identifying schools and movements, and judging the quality of literary output rather than approaching texts as sources more broadly.[7]

The reasons for the paucity of historical work done on late Ottoman poetic production are numerous. Ottoman studies in particular have been very archive-heavy, although cultural history and other fields have seen a steady growth in more recent years. The problem of linguistic and cultural familiarity presented by any source is made considerably worse by the complications of poetry, which in Arabic and Ottoman is often characterised by obscure vocabulary and metaphors, and complex intertextual references to the classical canon.

More reprehensibly, the remarkable persistence of the civilisational "decline" narrative, which in its literary form generally dismisses the literature of the entire "post-classical" period (from the late *Abbāsīd* period onwards) until the "cultural renaissance" of the nineteenth century (*al-nahḍa*) as stagnant and unoriginal (*munḥaṭṭ*), has meant that the literature of the Ottoman period has been largely sidelined in literary historians'

[4] Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 9-10.

[5] Rashid Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria Before 1914: A Reassessment," in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[6] Cf. Ramzi Baalbaki, *Poetry and History – The Value of Poetry in Reconstructing Arab History* (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2011).

[7] Cf. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Badawī, *Modern Arabic Literature*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

analysis.[8] This period was the last to receive a comprehensive treatment in the *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* series (2006).[9]

In the Ottoman period, as at other times, poetry was not simply an entertaining pastime, but a key political medium for addressing power.[10] This continued to be the case in the nineteenth century, despite sweeping changes in political discourse. For example, Namık Kemal turned to the traditional Arabo-Persian *kaside* style when composing his *Freedom Poem* (*Hürriyet Kasidesi*).[11] Throughout the late Ottoman period, we continue to find a remarkable overlap between political thinkers and poets.

The development of the political *kaside* (and political poetry more broadly) in Turkish was mirrored by similar developments in the Arabic-speaking world. Although the decline of patronage under the Ottomans led to a corresponding decrease in the production of *qaṣīdas*, which only ended with the rise of the neo-classicists in the late nineteenth century, other forms of less elite poetry, including poetry in colloquial spoken Arabic (*ʿāmmiyya*), continued to flourish during the Ottoman period. In the nineteenth century, these styles led the way in the development of political poetry, notably in the writings of Egyptian Satirist Yaʿqūb Ṣannūʿ.[12] The neoclassicists took longer to move away from the prescribed traditional themes (*aghrāḍ*) and genres in their *qaṣīdas*, but by the 1860s they were adapting the panegyric style to patriotic themes. This paved the way for the political poetry of the early twentieth century, which dealt with grand themes like liberty, despotism, revolution, and nationalism.[13] Many of al-Ruṣāfī's poems fall into this category, including *Charm to Calm a Madman* (*Ruqyat aṣ-Ṣarīʿ*). Also worthy of note are his commemoration of the 1908 Revolution, *July of Freedom* (*Tammūz al-Ḥurriyya*), and the Arabic lyrics to the 1908 National Anthem (*Nashīd Waṭanī*), also published in the *Dīwān*.

Not only was the Arabicpoetry of this time often explicitly political, it was also in many cases deeply engaged with the social issues of the day. In fact, the topic of social poetry (*shiʿr ijtimāʿī*) made more than one appearance in journals like *al-Muqtabas*.[14] A brief survey of the Dīwān ar-Ruṣāfī's index finds many poems with social titles like *The Divorcee* (*al-Muṭallaqa*), *Poverty and Sickness* (*al-Fuqr wa-ʿs-Siqām*), and *The Orphan at Eid* (*al-Yatīm fī ʾl-ʿĪd*). These poems typically appeared for the first time in dialogue with opinion pieces, debates, and articles dealing with the same subjects.[15]

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[8] For late Ottoman Turkish *kaside* poetry cf. Walter Andrews and Mehmed Kalpaklı, "Across Chasms of Change: The Kaside in Late Ottoman and Republican Times," in *Qaṣīda Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, eds. Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle, vol. 1 (Beirut: Brill, 1996).

[9] Muhammad Lutfi Al-Yousfi, "Poetic Creativity in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period, ed. Roger Allen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[10] Walter Andrews, "Speaking of Power: 'The Ottoman Kaside'," in *Qaṣīda Poetry*, eds. Sperl and Shackle, 282.

[11] Andrews and Kalpaklı, "Chasms of Change," 309.

[12] Ibid., 241-242.

[13] Sasson Somekh, "The Neo-Classical Arabic Poets."

[14] "Ash-Shiʿr al-Ijtimāʿī," *al-Muqtabas* 24 (1908).

[15] Fruma Zachs, *Gendering Culture in Greater Syria* (London: IB Tauris, 2014), 14

One compelling reason to look at the poetry of this particular period is that inasmuch as there was mass media in the early twentieth century, poetry was a key part of it. The journals in which poets made their names were typically printed outside the Ottoman Empire to avoid the notorious censorship of the Hamidian regime.[16] Nonetheless, they had a wide readership in the Empire and abroad.[17] In 1907, the Lebanese Naʿūm al-Labakī – writing in his New York-based journal *al-Munāzir* – was able to engage in a long war of words with the Syrian Muḥammad Kurd ʿAlī – writing in his own Cairo-based journal *al-Muqtabas* – on the subject of the Iraqi al-Ruṣāfī's poetry, submitted by post from faraway Baghdad.[18] Although the government was willing to go to great lengths to keep out subversive material which might "bewilder" (*tesvîs-i ezhân*) its "persuadable" populace, journals continued to flow in through the porous Egyptian border or via foreign post offices.[19] By the turn of the century, some newspapers had print runs of as many as 20,000 copies.[20] Readership was probably well beyond this: as historian of print media, Ami Ayalon, has noted, single copies of newspapers were passed around or read to crowds by literate customers in coffee shops known literally as "reading-houses" (*kıraathane*) in Turkish.[21] As such, the reach and relevance of late Ottoman poetry should not be underestimated. It not only passively reflected contemporary opinion, but played a key role in shaping it.

The life and times of Maʿrūf al-Ruṣāfī

Maʿrūf al-Ruṣāfī was born in the neighbourhood of Qaraghōl in Baghdad during the first few months of the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War. His largely absent father was a soldier of Kurdish extraction who eventually rose to the rank of sergeant-major (*başçavuş*) in the Baghdadi gendarmerie.[22] He was raised almost exclusively by his mother, a merchant's daughter. The family was of modest means, although wealthier than many of the urban poor with whom the young Ruṣāfī grew up.[23] As a child, he was educated first at the traditional Qurʾan school (*kuttāb*) before being sent to the military high school (*rüşdiye*), the institution of choice for upwardly mobile children from less well-off backgrounds. Here, he managed to successfully pass two years before failing his third - according to him - because of his weakness in mathematics, due to his limited understanding of

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[16] Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[17] Ibid.

[18] Najda Fatḥī Ṣafwa, *Maʿrūf ar-Ruṣāfī* (Beirut: Riad el-Rayyes, 1988), 11. Al-Labakī refused to believe al-Ruṣāfī was not a pen name adopted to avoid scrutiny by the authorities, given the perceived "backwardness" of Iraq and the poet's clear radical bent.

[19] İpek Yosmaoğlu, "Chasing the Printed Word: Press Censorship in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1913," *Turkish Studies Association Journal* 27, no. 1 (2003): 15-49.

[20] Malcolm Yapp, "Modernization and Literature in the Near and Middle East 1850-1914," in *Modern Literature in the Near and Middle East*, ed. Robin Ostle (London: Routledge, 2016).

[21] Ami Ayalon, *The Arabic Print Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 184.

[22] Yūsuf ʿIzzeddīn, *ar-Ruṣāfī Yarwī Sīrat Ḥayātihi* (Beirut: Dār al-Madā li-ṭ-Ṭibāʿa wa-n-Nashr, 2004), 146. This is according to his own estimate.

[23] Ibrāhīm al-Kīlānī, *Maʿrūf ar-Ruṣāfī: Dirāsa Nafsiyya Adabiyya wa-Ijtimāʿiyya* (Baghdad: IKA, 1978), 15.

Turkish, the language of study. After abandoning the *rüşdiye*, he returned to traditional education at the Ḥaydarkhāna Mosque.

At the Ḥaydarkhāna, al-Ruṣāfī studied under Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī, one of the most prominent religious intellectuals in Baghdad, whose Salafist curriculum[24] and personal interest in the young Ma'rūf left him with a lifelong "drive to reform society and further the cause of Islamic unity (*al-jāmi'a al-islāmiyya*)."[25] It was also al-Ālūsī who introduced him to poetry, lending him collections of canonical verse (*shawāhid*) and the *dīwāns* of the *Abbāsīd* masters.[26] After his education in Baghdad, he worked as a teacher, at the same time submitting poetry to various journals, until a mutiny led by officers associated with the opposition, Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), led to the reinstatement of constitutional government in 1908 – events which became known as the Young Turk Revolution (*inkılap* in Turkish, *inqilāb* in Arabic).[27]

The exact details of al-Ruṣāfī's activities immediately after the Revolution are somewhat unclear. In July 1908, he was working as an Arabic language teacher in a government school in Baghdad. At some point between July and December of 1908, he was invited to Istanbul by the journalist and public intellectual, Ahmet Cevdet, to serve as editor for an Arabic version of his journal *İkdam*. Al-Ruṣāfī left Baghdad with the Iraqi Deputies elected in 1908, probably in December of that year. When he arrived in the capital, however, he was unable to come to an agreement with Ahmet Cevdet and survived largely on the charity of other prominent Istanbul Arabs, in particular Nadhra Muṭrān and Zakī Mughāmis.[28] These two patrons convinced him to join an Arab Masonic lodge, the Ottoman Brotherhood (*Ikhwa 'Uthmāniyya*). After a brief return to Baghdad in late 1909 for want of money, his fortunes suddenly improved, perhaps thanks to the popularity of his Dīwān, which he published during a brief stopover in Beirut. In 1910, he became editor of the new Istanbul newspaper *al-'Arab*, and took up a series of prestigious teaching jobs before being nominated deputy (*meb'ûs*) in the Ottoman parliament, and stayed in Istanbul until 1919.[29]

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[24] Salafist here refers to the nineteenth - and early twentieth-century modernist or rationalist reform current spearheaded by the likes of Muḥammad 'Abduh, which is in some senses ancestral to modern Salafist currents but far from identical with them. For a discussion of this current see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970). I have been unable to identify a detailed study of al-Alūsī's thought in English, but for a brief treatment in Arabic see Ibrāhīm as-Samarrā'ī, *Mahmūd Shukrī al-Alūsī wa-Bulūgh al-Arab* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-Jāmi'iyya li-d-Dirāsāt wa'n-Nashr wa't-Tawzī', 1992).

[25] Al-Kīlānī, *ar-Ruṣāfī*, 21.

[26] 'Izzedīn, *ar-Ruṣāfī*, 225-229. *Shawāhid* (literally 'witnesses') are sections from the classical literary canon used to demonstrate points of literary Arabic grammar.

[27] In modern Arabic, *inqilāb* typically carries the negative connotations of "coup d'état" rather than "revolution," but it was originally a calque of the latter word (from the root *q-l-b* connoting turning over/revolving) and is the usual contemporary Arabic term for the 1908 Revolution.

[28] According to Ṣafwa, Ahmet Cevdet had published an article expressing sentiments which the Arabs of the capital found offensive and in the ensuing scandal declared his intention to begin publishing an Arabic journal as a goodwill gesture, perhaps without ever intending to follow through on his promise. Ṣafwa, *ar-Ruṣāfī*, 14.

[29] Ṣafwa, *ar-Ruṣāfī*, 20.

It seems that he had already attained some level of fame not only because of his poetry, but because of his activities as editor of the local CUP mouthpiece, *Baghdād*, first published in August 1908. Although he does not mention it himself in his interviews with journalist Yūsuf 'Izzedīn, he was also chosen by a CUP delegation despatched to Baghdad later that year to prepare the ground for elections by delivering a prepared speech at the Wazīr Mosque to explain the constitution.[30]

Politically, al-Ruṣāfī was clearly associated with the constitutionalist trend broadly - and the CUP more specifically. He was a personal acquaintance of the CUP-affiliated Interior Minister (*Dahiliye Nazırı*) Talat Paşa, even working briefly as his Arabic tutor, and was appointed as a member of a CUP committee on reform in the Arab provinces. It was also the CUP which engineered his election as Deputy for the Iraqi district of Munṭafiq in the 1912 elections. In his interviews with Yūsuf 'Izzeddīn, he asserted that he was never more than a fellow traveller, often critical of CUP policy, and many of the events recounted above that attest to a close relationship with the Committee are conspicuously absent from his own account. This probably says more about the political atmosphere of Iraq after the victory of Arab nationalism than it does about al-Ruṣāfī's Ottoman-era political leanings. In any case, until the collapse of the Empire he remained a committed Ottomanist.[31] Even later in life, he continued to defend the actions of the military governor of Syria, Cemal Paşa, in wartime Beirut. There, the Paşa had executed tens of notables affiliated with the Arabist current as traitors, in an event which became one of the foundational myths of Arab nationalism – on the grounds that the individuals targeted in the purges "drew their power from foreigners."[32]

Al-Ruṣāfī's politics

The sociologist Şerif Mardin observed in his study of the Young Ottomans that the intellectuals under consideration were "no giants of political theory but belong[ed] to the category of *hommes de lettres*, a euphemism used by the French for the intellectual jack-of-all-trades."[33] If this somewhat ungenerous comment is true of the likes of Namık Kemal, who alongside his poems and plays had several essays and articles to his name, it is even truer of al-Ruṣāfī, who seems to have written almost no prose during the late Ottoman period and confined himself to poetry. Nonetheless, if the Young Ottomans' thought is – as Mardin contends – "the expression of the political beliefs of the earliest modern Turkish intelligentsia," al-Ruṣāfī speaks in the language of the Ottomanist-Arab intelligentsia of the last days of the Empire, and as such, makes for an interesting study.

Al-Ruṣāfī's early forays into the world of poetry took place almost exclusively in the pages of the cultural-literary journal al-Muqtabas, published by the prominent Syrian

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[30] This event apparently triggered a wave of Muslim riots in Baghdad because of the public smoking of the CUP-aligned *mektupçu*, the large Jewish presence at the reception event, and rumours that ar-Ruṣāfī himself had stopped a Qur'an reciter in order to give his speech. Ibid., 11.

[31] Şafwa, *ar-Ruṣāfī*, 11-12.

[32] Ibid., 18.

[33] Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 9.

intellectual Muhammad Kurd ʿAlī. His loyalty to this journal and his personal friendship with Kurd ʿAlī were, in fact, so strong that he was apparently occasionally referred to as "*the al-Muqtabas poet*" (*shāʿir al-muqtabas*).[34] By far the most comprehensive collection of his poetry from the Ottoman era, however, is his 1910 *Dīwān*.[35] It is also here that we find the most explicit articulation of his political ideas.

Perhaps al-Ruṣāfī's most prominent political concern is the contrast between the achievements of the European states on the one hand and the position of a sometimes underspecified "us" on the other, often juxtaposed with the glories of a lost golden age. This civilisational narrative of decline (*inḥiṭāṭ*) was perhaps the pre-eminent problem debated by Muslim and Arab intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although, as a historiographical approach, the decline theory has been thoroughly debunked and cast into the dustbin of academic history, in the late-nineteenth century a simultaneous "rediscovery" of past glories, dialogue with western Orientalists, and the colonial supremacy of Europe meant that the question of how to secure a return to a lost golden age was of much interest to political thinkers and activists in places like the Ottoman Empire. Al-Ruṣāfī's poetry is full of appeals to halcyon days, as in these lines addressed to the city of Baghdad:

Tatābaʿat il-khuṭūbu ʿalayki tatrā / wa-baddala minki ḥulwa l-ʿayshi murrā
Beset by troubles one after another which took from you the sweet things in life and made them bitter

Fa-hallā tunjibīna fatan ʾagharrā / ʾarāki ʾaqumti lā talidīna ḥurrā!
Will you not bring forth an honourable youth? / You seem to have become barren, no longer giving birth to free men

Wa-kunti li-mithlihi ʾazkā walūdi!
Although you once bore many of their like!

ʾAqmaʿa l-juhlu fīki lahu shuhūdā / wa-sāmaki bi-l-huwāni lahu l-jusūdā
Ignorance has set up its signs in you / and

Matā tubdīna minki lahu juḥūdā / fa-hallā ʿidti dhākiratan ʾuhūdā
When will you resist / have you not considered the memory of a time

Bihinna rashadti ʾayyāma r-Rashīdi?
When you followed the right course, the days of [Hārūn] ar-Rashīd?

Or this couplet:

Abkā 'alā 'ummatin dāra z-zamānu lahā / qablan wa-dāra 'alayhā ba'du li-l-ghayri
I weep for a nation whose time came / before, and went thereafter to another

Kam khallada d-dahru min 'ayyāmihim khabaran / zāna ṭ-ṭurūsa wa-laysa l-khubru ka-l-khabari
The epoch has immortalised so many stories of their days / adorning pages – but experience (khubr) is not like stories (khabar)

Although the first example is unambiguous, the term *ummah* here perhaps suggests that al-Ruṣāfī is talking about the totality of the Muslim community. We should not leap too eagerly to this conclusion, however, since *ummah* (and its Turkish form *ümmet*) was also used in the nineteenth century as equivalents of the European "nation."[36] Whether he intended *ummah* and *'urub* to be identified with one another, this frequent under-specification of whom exactly al-Ruṣāfī represents is a general problem in his politics. In line with the general post-Ottoman climate in which it has been analysed, his poetry has been read as Arab-nationalist in character – to the extent that the Jordanian government makes use of two uncredited lines from al-Ruṣāfī's Arabic lyrics of the post-1908 Ottoman anthem on one official web page describing the Great Arab Revolt.[37] And it is true that a number of al-Ruṣāfī's poems explicitly call for an Arab "awakening," often literally in those terms. In one of his poems, *Awakening the Sleepers* (*Īqāẓ ar-Raqūd*), we find the following stanza:

Lahfī 'alā l-'urubi amsat min jumūdihim / ḥattā l-jamādātu tashkū wa-hiya fī ḍajri
Woe to the Arabs, of whose immobility (jumūd) / even immobile objects (jamādāt) complain despairingly

Qawmu humu sh-shamsa kānū wa-l-warā qamrun / wa-lā karāmata lawlā sh-shamsa li-l-qamri
A people who were the sun and all mankind the moon / and the moon has no dignity without the sun

Rāḥū waqad a'qabū min ba'dihim 'aqiban / nāmū 'an il-amri tafwī'ḍan ilā l-qadri
Who went, having produced many progeny / and neglected ("slept away from") everything, trusting in fate

A number of other poems in the "History" section of the Dīwān also explicitly bewail the decline of the Arabs and their subjugation by other peoples, as in the following couplet from the "historical" poem *Hulagu and al-Mustaʿṣim* (*Hūlākō waʾl-Mustaʿṣim*):

ʿAdāla min al-ʿurubi l-ʿaʾājimu baʿda mā ʿadāla Banī l-ʿAbbāsi min Banī Ḥarbi
Foreigners overcame the Arabs after the children of ʿAbbās overcame the children of Harb

Wa-lam ʾara li-l-ʾayyāmi ʾashnaʿa subbatan li-ʿumrika min mulki l-ʿulūji ʿalā l-ʿarabi
I have seen no day more disgraceful, I swear, than when barbarians[38] hold power over the Arabs

Nonetheless, we should avoid the instinctive characterisation of al-Ruṣāfī as an Arab nationalist simply from these lines. As mentioned previously, the poet became closely associated with the CUP during his time in Istanbul, and whilst still in Baghdad, he edited the local CUP organ. His poems include a number of paeans in support of the CUP and the new constitutional regime, including *The General Assembly* (*al-Majlis al-ʿUmūmī*), *July of Freedom* (*Tammūz al-Ḥurriyya*, commemorating the 1908 Revolution), and *In Salonica* (*Fī Salānīk*). The latter, a paean to the forces of the Action Army (*Hareket Ordusu*) who suppressed the counterrevolution of March 1909,[39] includes a number of references to unity (*ittiḥad*) – perhaps the single word most identified with the Unionists:

laqad samiʿū min al-waṭani ʾl-anīna / fa-ḍajjū biʾl-bikāʾi lahu ḥanīnā
They heard the fatherland's cry / and out of affection wept for it

wa-ʾanbaʾahu bi-ṣārimihi l-yaqīna / jamīʿan liʾd-difāʿi musallaḥīna
And informed it with firm certainty / together, to arms, to defence!

wa-thārū min marābiḍihim ʾusūdan / bi-ṣawti l-ittiḥādi muzamjirīna
They came out from their lairs, lions / roaring with the voice of unity!

The following couplets point to the absence of unity keeping fire from burning, and highlight the role that the "unity of two elements" (*ittiḥād al-ʿunṣurayn*) plays in

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keeping a fire alive. There is perhaps an allusion here to the Turks and the Arabs – "element" (*ʿunṣur*) was used in late Ottoman terminology to refer to the different ethnic communities making up the empire.

> *wa-mā ttaqadat nāru l-ḥamiyyati minkumu*
> Yet the fire of fury has not risen from you
>
> *li-faqdi ttiḥādin fa-staṭāla khumūduhā*
> Because of a lack of unity, its silence has gone on long
>
> *wa-lawlā ttiḥāda l-ʿunṣurayni la-mā ghadā*
> If it were not for the unity of the two elements then
>
> *min an-nāri yadhkū...*
> Nothing of fire would burn

These poems also often touch more explicitly on Ottomanist themes like the unity of different religious groups under the banner of a cosmopolitan nationalism. In the following lines – taken again from *In Salonica* – al-Ruṣāfī celebrates the presence of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Action Army, "unified in determination, although not unified in religion," brought together by the fatherland:

> *laqad jamaʿū l-jumūʿa fa-min naṣārā / wa-min hūdin hunāka wa-muslimīna*
> They brought together all sorts, Christians / and Jews were there, and Muslims
>
> *fa-kānū l-jaysha alfun min junūdin / mujannadatin, wa min mutaṭawwaʿīna*
> An army of a thousand enlisted / and volunteer soldiers
>
> *tarāhum fīhi muttaḥidīna ʿazman / wa-mā hum fīhi muttaḥidīna dīnā*
> Unified in determination / although not unified in religion
>
> *wa-hiya l-ʿawṭānu tajʿalu fī baynihim / akhāʾan fī maḥabbatihim raṣīna*
> The fatherland creating between them / a staunch brotherhood of love

In another poem which is in many ways typical of his social poetry, *The Orphan's Mother* (*Umm al-Yatīm*), al-Ruṣāfī paints a heart-rending picture of the grief of an Armenian woman whose husband was killed for "walking as an Armenian" (*mashā ʾarmaniyyan*) in the city during the Adana riots of 1908 before attempting a (perhaps somewhat misplaced) attempt at defence of Islam against intercommunal strife:[40]

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[40] This comes with a footnote in the original saying "He alludes here to the Adana unrest which flared up because of the foolish among the Armenians and the ignorant among the Muslims."

A-Maryamu ʾinna llāha lā shakka nāqimun / min al-qawmi fī qatli n-nufūsi l-muḥarrami
O Maryam, God is most certainly enraged / At the people for killing, which is forbidden

A-Maryamu fīmā taḥkumīna tabaṣṣarī / fa-ʾin ʾanti ʾadrakti l-ḥaqīqata fa-ḥkumī
O Maryam, ponder on your judgement / For when you know the truth, then judge

Fa-laysa bi-dīnin kulla mā yafʿalūnahu / wa-lākinnahu juhlun wa-sawʾu tafahhumi
None of what they do is religion / it is rather ignorance and misunderstanding

Although the simultaneous presence of Arabist and apparent Ottomanist themes may seem contradictory, particularly in poems that seem to call for an Arab "awakening," there is no great contradiction – it is only if we identify Ottomanism with Turkish nationalism, rather than understanding the thoroughly cosmopolitan character that many minorities gave it, that an Arab cultural and even political revival necessarily runs contrary to Ottoman or even official CUP discourse. In fact, for many Ottoman citizens of non-Turcophone background, and perhaps many Turks as well, Ottomanism meant harnessing the simultaneous national-cultural awakenings of all the Empire's distinct ethnic groups and the inevitable leaps forward that these awakenings would bring about to strengthen both those groups individually and the Empire as a whole. There may also be something of a progression here from a greater concern with Arab and Baghdadi issues (many of the poems have a particularly regional focus) to a reinvigorated passion for the Empire brought about by the exciting victory of the constitutionalists in 1908. But even if this is the case, al-Ruṣāfī's easy transition from one to the other, and his ability to publish poems of both colours in the same collection, bring us back to the same point.

Al-Ruṣāfī, then, was an Ottomanist and an Arabist, and both tendencies can be detected in his work. He sees a problem of decline and decay in the various communities with which he identifies, and contrasts the glorious past with the sad state of affairs in his own time. This is an issue that needs to be addressed. Al-Ruṣāfī also has a sharply articulated and powerful idea, albeit vague, of how the state should operate.

In many ways, al-Ruṣāfī's ideas here reflect the influence of the group of nineteenth-century reformist intellectuals, known as the Young Ottomans - or other Islamic Modernists active at the same time, than they do the positivism of the CUP opposition.[41] Al-Ruṣāfī himself produced an Arabic translation of Namık Kemal's constitutionalist tract *Dream* (*Rüyâ*) advertised in the back matter of the *Dīwān*, and was, as previously mentioned, a pupil of the modernist intellectual Muhammad Shukrī al-Ālūsī, as well as being a beneficiary of a broadly traditional religious education. Such ideas reflect a broader intellectual climate in which the vague positivism of the CUP's founding members was unusual and, for many, unappealing.[42]

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[41] Cf. Mardin, *The Genesis*, 81.
[42] Hanioğlu notes the much greater popularity of the Islamic-modernist *Mizan* as compared to the more conventional CUP *Meşveret* in his discussion of the Ottoman opposition. See Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 81.

One of the key accusations against the Sultan is that he is irreligious, disqualifying his claim to the title of Caliph. In the couplet given below, al-Ruṣāfī juxtaposes traditional Islamic-Ottoman monarchist political concepts like the Shadow of God on Earth (ẓilla 'llāhi) with the reality of the Sultan. This was also an argument made by other members of the religious opposition as early as the 1890s.[43] Given Sultan Abdülhamid II's (r. 1876-1908) famous foregrounding of the religious legitimacy of his office during his reign and his dependence on pan-Islamic symbolism,[44] these lines take on an additional nuance:

A-yakūnu ẓilla 'llāhi tāriku ḥukmihi 'l- / manṣūṣi fī āyi 'l-kitābi 'l-munzali?
Can one who has abandoned His laws / as laid out in the Holy Book, be the Shadow of God?

Am hal yakūnu khalīfatan li-rasūlihi / man ḥāda 'an hadhyi 'n-nabiyyi 'l-mursali?
Should the Successor (*khalīfa*) of its Messenger / be one who deviates from the Prophet's divine guidance?

In the same poem the term "Abode of the Caliphate" (*Dār al-Khilāfa*), the religious epithet of Istanbul, is contrasted with the reality of government corruption:

Aḍḥat manāṣibuhā tubā'u wa-tushtarā / fa-ghadat tafūḍu li-l-ghanī 'l-ajhali
Its positions are bought and sold / granted to the ignorant rich man

Tu'ṭā mu'ajjalatan li-man yabtā'uhā / wa-matā 'nqaraḍa 'l-ajlu 'l-musammā ya'zuli
They are given for the term to he who buys them / and when the appointed term finishes, he is discharged

Fa-yarūḥu yashrī thāniyan wa-bi-mā 'rtashā / qad 'āda min 'ahli 'th-thirā'i 'l-'ajzali
And buys another, having become by the / bribes he has taken, tremendously wealthy

Fa-yaẓullu fī Dāri 'l-Khilāfati rāshiyan / ḥattā ya'ūdu bi-manṣibi ka-'l-awwali
So he stays in the House of the Caliphate bribing / until he gets another position like the first

Sūqun tubā'u bihā 'l-marātibu summiyat / Dāra 'l-Khilāfati 'inda man lam ya'quli!
A market where positions are sold / called "House of the Caliphate" by those who do not understand!

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[43] Hanioğlu, *Young Turks*, 51.
[44] Cf. Kemal Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

In frequent references to justice (*'adl*), al-Ruṣāfī evokes the "circle of justice" (*adâlet dairesi*) of traditional Ottoman theory and the importance of just rule/the provision of justice to understanding of the state's function and purpose. Indeed, justice was famously a common and uniquely Ottoman addition to the otherwise stereotyped revolutionary slogan *Hürriyet, Uhuvvet, Müsâvât* (Liberty, Fraternity, Equality). It also serves to underline the hypocrisy of the Hamidian government, which continued to emphasise the symbolism of *adâlet*.[45]

> *Fī 'l-mulki tafʿalu min faẓāʾiʿi jawrihā / mā lam taqul, wa-taqūlu mā lam tafʿali*
> In its rule it carries out in acts of terrible oppression / What it has not said, and says what it has not done

> *Malaʾat qarāṭīsa 'z-zamāni kitābatan / li-l-ʿadli wa-hiya bi-ḥukmihā lam taʿdili*
> It has filled the pages of time with writing / About justice, yet in its rule it is not just

The Islamic-modernist climate is also visible in the emphasis on ignorance (*juhl*). Ignorance is one of the poet's favourite subjects, and the "ignorant" – especially those who do not realise their own ignorance, particularly among the religious elite – are the target of all of his lampoons (*hijāʾ*) in the *Dīwān*. Although al-Ruṣāfī's particular fixation on ignorance is perhaps slightly unusual, the contrast of ignorance and rationality (*'aql*) was common in the intellectual discourse of the time, which identified the former simultaneously as the symptom and cause of the perceived backwardness of Islamic civilisation.[46] In this three-line lampoon, for example, he skewers an appointee to the branch of the Education Ministry in Baghdad:

> *Maʿārifu Baghdāda qad jāʾahā / mudīrun min aṭ-ṭayshi fī masraḥi*
> A director came to the Education Ministry / in Baghdad, in a scene of heedlessness

> *Ḥimārun walākinnahu nāṭiqun / wa-ṭiflun walākinnahu multaḥi*
> A donkey,[47] yet he talks / a child, yet he is bearded

> *Fa-yā 'ayyuhā l-ʿilmu 'anhā rtaḥil / wa-yā 'ayyuhā l-juhlu fīhā slaḥi*
> O knowledge, flee from there! / And o ignorance, drop your dung there!

The first major point on which al-Ruṣāfī differs from the Young Ottomans, however, is his target. Mardin notes that the Young Ottomans generally avoided direct criticism of the monarchy and of then Sultan Abdülaziz (r. 1861-1867).[48] For them, in fact, a strong

[45] Selim Deringil, "The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 1 (1993): 3-29.
[46] Cf. "Muḥammad 'Abduh" in Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*.
[47] *Ḥimārʾs* double meaning of "idiot" and "donkey" makes the insult even more explicit in Arabic than in English.
[48] Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 9.

monarch represented a possible escape from the tyranny of the real enemy: political overreach by a small class of self-satisfied high-ranking bureaucrats, the so-called "men of the *Tanzimat*." Al-Ruṣāfī, on the other hand, grew up under a very different system – one in which the strings of government were all pulled by Sultan Abdülhamid II from the Yıldız Palace. Taking aim at bad counsel and coteries of advisors in the Hamidian period would have been not only dated and toothless but practically meaningless. Instead al-Ruṣāfī attacks despotism (*istibdād*) and the concept of a government which cannot be held responsible for its actions. To some extent his opposition to autocracy mirrors that which had long been espoused by Young Turk figures like Ahmet Rıza, not least in communications with the British embassy:[49]

> *'Abat as-siyāsatu 'an tadūma ḥukūmatu / khaṣṣat bi-ra'yin muqaddasin lam yu'sali*
> Good rulership[50] rejects that a government / Given over to a sacred unquestioned opinion

> *Mithla 'l-ḥukūmati tastabiddu bi-ḥukmihā / mithla 'l-bināʾi 'alā naqan mutahayyili*
> A government which is despotic in its rule / Is like a house built on sand!

Many poems feature a personified figure of freedom or justice, often addressed in a kind of romantic supplication. Sometimes there is an emphasis on "freedoms" plural – as here for example the freedom of the press – rooted in the liberal tradition:

> *Ayyā ḥurriyyata ṣ-ṣaḥafi rḥamīnā / fa-'innā lam nazil laki 'āshiqīna*
> O freedom of the press, have mercy – for we are still in love with you

> *Matā taṣilīna kaymā ṭualliqīnā / 'addīnā fī wiṣāliki wa-mṭulīnā*
> When will you come to release us? Put off our reunion, delay us

> *Fa-'innā minki naqna'u bi'l-wu'ūdi*
> We are still satisfied with your promises!

The liberal influence is also visible in another critique al-Ruṣāfī makes, this time of the passivity of his fellow citizens in the face of the state. He identifies the source of the state's financial and coercive power as the very same citizenry which it oppresses, alluding perhaps to social contract theory whilst simultaneously denying the state any inherent legitimacy to take from its subjects and implying a specific method of resistance:

> *'ajabtu li-qawmin yakhḍa 'ūna li-dawlatin*
> I am amazed by a people who serve a state

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yasūmuhum bi-l-mawbiqāti ʿamīduhā
Whose chief imposes such great wrongs on them

wa-ʾaʿjabu min dhā ʾannahum yarhabūnahā
Even more amazing is that they fear it

wa-ʾamwālahā minhum wa minhum junūduhā!
When its money is from them, and its soldiers from among them!

Elsewhere al-Ruṣāfī explicitly links the weakness of the state and military defeats of the Empire to its despotic system of rule:

Ḥukūmatu shaʿbinā jārat wa-ṣārat / ʿalaynā tastabiddu bimā ʾashārat
The government of our people has been unjust and has become despotic in its commands

Fa-lā ʾaḥadan daʿathu wa-lā stashārat / wa-kullu ḥukūmatin ẓalamat wa-jārat
It has appealed to nobody and sought nobody's opinion, and every government has been oppressive and unjust

Fa-bashshirhā bi-tamzīqi l-ḥudūdi
Warn them their borders will be broken!

He departs even more radically from the precedents set by the Young Ottomans and even by his contemporaries in the CUP. Although the 1908 Revolution did involve some popular mobilisation – albeit very carefully choreographed by the Committee's representatives – it had taken years to convince the largely elitist Paris-based émigrés, who formed the core of the Ottoman opposition, of the advisability of any kind of violent action not involving foreign intervention in their favour, or of a largely bloodless palace coup. If these poems were written prior to the 1908 Revolution, such activist sentiments as expressed in these lines would have placed al-Ruṣāfī in a small minority of an opposition generally wary of any kind of popular action:

Hattāma nabqā luʿbatan li-ḥukūmatin / dāmat tujarriʾunā naqīʿa ʾl-ḥanẓali
How long will we remain the plaything of a government / which makes us drink from this bitter cup?

Tanḥū binā ṭuruqa ʾl-bawāri taḥayyufan / wa-tasūmunā sawʾa ʾl-ʿadhābi ʾl-ahwali
Which takes us down the roads of ruin arbitrarily / and forces us into the worst of tortures?

Wa-hādhā wa-naḥnu mujdilūna tijāha-hā / ka-ʾl-fāri murtaʿidan tijāha ʾl-khayṭali
While we prostrate ourselves before it / like a mouse transfixed by fear before a cat

Mā bālunā minhā nakhāfu l-qatla in / qumnā? A-mā sa-namūtu in lam nuqtali?
Why are we so afraid of killing if / we rise? Will we not die, if we are not killed?

The same applies to this triptych:

qad istaḥwadhat yā li-l-khisāri 'alaykum
And yet, human devils have seized control, o woe

shayāṭīnu 'insun ṣāla minkum mirrīduhā
Over you, whose leader has stolen from you

wa-mā ttaqadat nāru l-ḥamiyyati minkumu
Yet the fire of fury has not risen from you

There is evidence, however, that the opposition within the Empire was generally much more radical than those in exile abroad. The merger with the Ottoman Freedom Society (*Osmanlı Hürriyet Cemiyeti*) in the interior partly led the Unionist émigrés to accept the idea of some kind of popular revolutionary action. This was in opposition to the palace coup or foreign intervention they had previously sought as the most appropriate means of changing the government.[51] Al-Ruṣāfī's poetry might be considered further evidence of this trend.

Perhaps the most dramatic departure from both the conventional Young Ottoman and Islamic Modernist position is an extraordinary section of one poem, *Charm to Calm a Madman* (*Ruqyat aṣ-Ṣarī'*), which goes so far as to advocate actual republicanism:

In lam yakun dhallu 'l-'ulūfu li-wāḥidin / ḥumqan, fa-hal min ṣaḥīhi 't-ta'aqquli
If the degradation of thousands for one / Is not foolish, then is it reasonable

Anna 'l-hukūmata wa-hiya jumhūriyyatun / kashafat 'amāyata qalbi kulli muḍallili
That governments,[52] which are republics / Have uncovered the folly in the heart of every misguider

Sārat ilā nujḥi 'l-'ubbādi bi-sīratin / abdat lahum ḥumqa zamāni 'l-awwali
Have worked for the success of the subjects in a way / Which has made clear to them the foolishness of the time before

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[51] This is questioned by Sohrabi - among others - who claims that the change in orientation preceded the merger and was led by the activist faction already present within the CUP. Nonetheless, the reorganisation of the CUP and the rise of the activists was led by Bahaeddin Şakir, a latecomer to the exiled CUP in Paris who was involved in political activities in the interior before fleeing as late as 1905. Cf. Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 89; and Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[52] The most syntactically straightforward reading of *al-ḥukūma* here is "the government," but the intended meaning seems to be a definite singular generic "governments" given the context.

Fa-samaw ilā ʾawji ʾl-ʿalāʾi wa-naḥnu lam / nabruḥ nasūkhu ʾl-ḥaḍīḍi ʾl-asfali
And have risen to the heights of glory, while we / remained here, at the lowest nadir

Ḥattā ʾstaqallū kaʾl-kawākibi fawqanā / tajlū ʾẓ-ẓilāma bi-nawrihā ʾl-mutahallili
Until they ascended like planets above us / piercing the darkness with their shining light

Wa-ʿalū bi-ḥaythu idhā shakhaṣnā naḥwahum / min taḥtihim, ḍaḥakū ʿalaynā min ʿali
They have risen so high that if we go up towards them / from below, they laugh at us from on high

Labisū thiyāba fikhārihim mawshiyatan / bi-ʾl-ʿizzi wa-hiya mina ʾṭ-ṭarāzi ʾl-akmali
They have put on their robes of pride, decorated / with glory, the most perfect type

Nālū wiṣāla munā ʾn-nufūsi wa-ʾinnahā / ḥurriyyatu ʾl-ʿayshi ʾr-raghīdi ʾl-mukhḍili
They have achieved the communion of souls' desires, which are / the freedom of a life of plenty

Ḥattā ʾuqīma mujassaman timthāluhā / bayna ʾsh-shuʿūbi ʿalā banāʾi haykali
Until [freedom's] statue has been raised / On a plinth among the nations

Timthālun nāʾimatu ʾl-shamāʾili wijhuhā / tazdādu nawran minhu ʾaynu ʾl-mujtalī
A statue of fine qualities, whose face / lights up the eye of the beholder

ʾA-fa-baʿda hādhā yā surāta mawāṭinī / narḍā wa-nuqnaʿu biʾl-maʿāshi ʾl-ardhali?
And after this, noble people of my homeland / Will we be satisfied with the contemptible life?

In advocating for a republic, al-Ruṣāfī was ahead of his contemporaries and far from the Young Ottomans, even if his language reflected their views. Namık Kemal, for example, mentioned the idea of a republican government for the Ottoman Empire only in order to dismiss it. Even the radical activists of al-Ruṣāfī's contemporaries, the CUP, did not espouse republicanism. In fact, according to Şükrü Hanioğlu's survey of the Ottoman opposition, "no significant group" proposed a republican government.[53] Al-Ruṣāfī's writings might be taken, however, as evidence of such a trend of thought, at least among some of the younger members of the intelligentsia.

Conclusion

On first glance, al-Ruṣāfī represents something of a mystery for our conventional image of late Ottoman politics. An Iraqi Arab intellectual from the city which would later become the jewel in the Hashemite crown, educated in a traditional religious school,

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[53] Hanioğlu, *Preparation*, 298.

proved to be an ardent supporter of the CUP and an opponent of Arab independence. Even many years later, he defended the actions of Cemal Paşa – by that point elevated from bloody tragedy to pivotal moment in the founding of Arabism – and looked back fondly on the Ottoman Empire. And in a period in which we are accustomed to look for a relatively dry state-strengthening constitutionalism generally averse to popular uprisings and unable to consider the prospect of an Empire without an Emperor, al-Ruṣāfī espoused republicanism.

We should be wary, however, of assuming that al-Ruṣāfī's ideas were as unrepresentative as has so far been assumed. The fact that he held these political opinions and that he was able to express them publicly – in the popular and broadly read *Dīwān*,– suggest that they were at least understandable and consumable by the educated Arabic-speaking readership for which he wrote. The positions of Arab Ottomanists who remained invested in the survival of the Empire have not been adequately researched, and it may be that al-Ruṣāfī's views were not so unusual despite all.

Although we should not draw too many conclusions from the work of one individual, al-Ruṣāfī's writings are certainly significant in their own right. They also point to a broader intellectual world expressed primarily through late Ottoman Arabic literature. Whilst this written production has received some treatment by academics concerned particularly with literary history *per se*, it has remained underused, as a source in the debates on the intellectual climate of the late Ottoman-Arab world. Ottoman-Arab intellectuals were, as shown by the case of al-Ruṣāfī, in constant dialogue with their Ottoman-Turkish counterparts, and a full picture of the late Empire should also take this into account.

Memories and Narrations of "Nations" Past:
Accounts of Early Migrants from Kerala in the Gulf in the Post-Oil Era

M.H. Ilias

This paper investigates a set of narratives revolving around the experiences of early post-oil migrants from Kerala to the Gulf States. These narratives take different forms such as individuals' spoken memories, recollections, perspectives, and narrative accounts of events and experiences. Their themes range widely from the simple renditions of experience of travel to their subjective account of the history of nation-building in the host countries. As witnesses to many seminal events in the history of the Gulf states, memories of migrants from Kerala must not be merely seen as personal storytelling about the past. Rather, they could be interpreted as a collective effort to retell history in an alternative way. They are particularly useful as they open a window into the early South Asian ordinary migrants' perceptions about a plethora of historical events, such as post-colonial transition of Gulf societies, state formation, and nation-building. Such narratives are generally absent from the "standard" records of history of the region.

Introduction

Migration of people from Kerala, South India, to the Arab Gulf region has generated various forms of oral histories and local narratives, both in the migrant's host countries and in Kerala. Narratives revolving around the early post-oil migration that began in the 1940s possess especially interesting dimensions. The primary intention of this article is to analyse the testimonials and personal narratives of some of the early migrants from Kerala to the Gulf States.

Though the post-oil migration of South Indians to the Gulf began as early as the 1940s, the 50s and 60s witnessed a massive influx of "undocumented" labourers into the region. This period coincided with the incipient phase of state formation in the Gulf region.[1] Increased demand for labour in the newly emerging oil-based economies was largely met by the arrival of workers from various ports of the Indian subcontinent on illegal passenger fleets,[2] while recruitments through formal channels were limited and remained mainly in the hands of agencies assigned by Western oil companies. While migrants from urban areas like Mumbai relied on formal means, those from coastal villages of Kerala and Gujarat tapped into the possibilities offered by the historical

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[1] S. Priyadershini., "Airlifted from Kuwait," *Hindu*, 27 January 2016, accessed 1 November 2017, http://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/Airlifted-from-Kuwait/article14022775.ece>.

[2] Ian J. Seccombe, "Labour Migration to the Arabian Gulf: Evolution and Characteristics 1920-1950," *Bulletin of British Society for Middle Eastern Studies* 10, no.1 (1983): 3-20.

commercial links between these regions and the Arabian Peninsula.[3] They boarded vessels of Gujarati and Sindhi merchants who came to South Asian ports to procure goods and subsequently transported them to the Persian Gulf ports of Dubai, Muscat, and Bahrain. It must be noted that these movements, undertaken secretly at the risk of the migrants and merchants, did not face any legal sanctions in either the originating or receiving countries.[4]

Typically, the early migrants had neither educational qualification nor jobs ensured in the host countries at the onset of their journey. They lacked proper travel documents and proof of identity.[5] The first generation of migrants from Kerala, therefore, mainly included uneducated and unskilled labourers who had found in migration a solution to problems such as unemployment and poverty.[6] This pattern of migration continued up to the mid-1970s, the period when the receiving countries began to formalise and institutionalise their immigration policies through the enactment of a new set of laws.[7] This articles places special attention to the accounts of people who resorted to "unlawful" means of migration.

The narratives investigated in this piece manifest themselves in various forms including individual's spoken memories, personal recollections, perspectives, and narrative accounts of events and experiences. The study permeates a broad range of memories, which reflect the lived experiences of early Kerala migrants. The underlying themes range widely from simple renditions of experiences of travel to subjective accounts of the history of development of infrastructure, evolution of bureaucracy and nation-building in host countries. The focus of the testimonials presented here revolve mainly around two broad themes: traumatic experiences of travel from their home countries to the region and life in the Arab Gulf states. While these themes are typical of the life stories of first generation post-oil Gulf migrants from South and South-East Asia, the eastern Gulf states, and eastern Africa, some narratives contain culturally specific references, as well as atypical elements.

The post-oil economic development in the Persian Gulf brought a huge demand for expatriate workers throughout the region. The recruitment policy in the initial phase was strongly influenced by traditional structures.[8] Local Arabs, along with slaves from the African continent, were employed in large numbers. They mainly worked as construction workers engaged in building roads, as well as in accommodation facilities at the oil camps.[9]

[3] Edward Simpson, *Muslim Society and the Western Indian Ocean: The Seafarers of Kachchh* (London: Routledge, 2006), 4, 6.
[4] Interview with Alawi Haji, one of the early migrants who moved to the UAE in the early 1960s, held on 26 May 2014 in Kerala.
[5] M. A. Rahman, *Pravasiyude Yudhangal* (Kochi: Saikatham Books, 2014), 2-4.
[6] B. A. Prakash, "Impact of Foreign Remittances: A Case Study of Chavakkad Village in Kerala," *Economic and Political Weekly* 13, no. 27 (1978): 3210-3215.
[7] Seccombe, "Labour Migration to the Arabian Gulf," 13-20.
[8] Ian J. Seacombe and R. I. Lawless, "Foreign Worker Dependence in the Gulf, and the International Oil Companies: 1910-50," *International Migration Review* 20, no. 3 (Autumn, 1986): 548-574.
[9] Ibid., 549.

The demand, however, soon outstripped the local supply, compelling oil companies to turn to other nationalities in order to meet their labour needs.[10] Yemen, Iran, and Iraq emerged as the major suppliers of labour in the early 1930s. However, the increase in the number of Iranian labourers, who generally belonged to the Shiite denomination, caused serious religious concerns for the local rulers by the end of 1930s.[11] From that period onwards, the supply of migrant workers was not only influenced by their immediate availability, but also affected by political considerations and preferences.[12] Indians under British rule were the major beneficiaries of this change as the British administration in the Gulf preferred the employment of Indians over Iranians, whom they regarded as potential Iran's agents that might further this state's claims over some of the disputed territories in the region.[13] Subsequently, the demand for Indian labourers grew to the extent that even "undocumented" migrants who had resorted to illegal immigration channels were absorbed in the labour market without much hassle.[14] Oil companies either directly opened recruiting offices in Bombay or deployed agents to the region in order to recruit skilled and semi-skilled personnel on their behalf.[15]

A formal complaint from C. M. Nair, an employee of the Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO), is believed to be the first document that provides a detailed account of the conditions of early post-oil era migrants from Kerala.[16] The document, which was received by the Ministry of External Affairs in India in 1948, concerns a compensation claim by C. M. Nair from the company:

> It is commonplace to assert that the condition of Indian workers in the oil companies in the Persian Gulf is most unsatisfactory. The Government of India is, however, not in a strong position to take remedial action because we are ought to serve in these companies of our own free will and subscribe to a contract which places the company in a strong position […] [T]he real reason why we suffer these degrading conditions is the economic pressure at home despite uncomfortable employment.

Due to the specific nature of immigration during this period, employment contracts were mostly unilateral, thus granting employers arbitrary and extensive powers to dismiss workers on the slightest pretext. Moreover, workers found themselves in poor living and working conditions. For example, Malayali employees of Gulf business firms and factories, in addition to inadequate housing and poor access to medical facilities,

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[10] Ibid., 555.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid. and M. H. Ilias, "South Asian Labour Crisis in Dubai and the Prospects of Indian Policy in the Arab Gulf Region," *Indian Journal of Politics and International Relations* 4, no. 1-2 (2010): 74-102.
[13] Seccombe, "Labour Migration to the Arabian Gulf," 18.
[14] Ibid., 17.
[15] Seacombe and Lawless, "Foreign Worker Dependence in the Gulf, and the International Oil Companies: 1910-50," 261.
[16] JS Mehta to E. A. Wing Ministry of EA & CR. U. O. No. D 2338/48 on 27 July, 1948, Treatment of Employees in Bahrain, F 18(27) AWT/48. and F.N. 18-AWT/48 Vide S. No. 1 and 5.

also faced racial discrimination and unequal compensation for their work. Nair writes, "the employees from the European countries were paid twice as much as an Indian doing the same job. The raw young Americans, for instance, were promoted over the heads of Indian and Pakistani veterans."[17] Any attempt at raising their issues and forming unions was met with reprisals such as the dismissal of those involved.[18] It was only in 1948 and as a result of consistent complaints from Indian employees working in oil companies in Bahrain, that the issue of discrimination came to the attention of the Indian state. The Indian Government subsequently appointed its own representatives to look after the interests of nationals throughout the region.[19]

The massive influx of South Asian workers to the Gulf region has invited critical focus and triggered an ongoing dialogue on the migrants' socio-cultural impact on their host communities. In this regard, Seccombe's work on early migrants in the Gulf constitutes a rather exceptional example,[20] while other scholars like Errichiello have sketched out the pattern of evolution of modern international migration in the Arab Gulf States after the discovery of oil.[21] There is a rich but largely unutilized repository of work in Malayalam that deal with the topic of movement and travel as well as the political and economic situation in the Arab Gulf region. They include articles published in popular magazines, daily news reports, and biographies and memoirs. Nonetheless, studies that adequately deal with early South Asian migrants' various forms of historical narratives based on first person accounts of their journeys, as well as their perspectives on major events in the Gulf, are scarce.

This piece aims to fill this gap in scholarship by developing an understanding about a particular segment of the history of nation-building in the Gulf. This will be done through the testimonials and life histories of a dozen of Keralites who spent a large part of their lives in the Gulf. The present research has emerged from fieldwork conducted by the author in both the home and host (mainly United Arab Emirates and Qatar) countries between 2012 and 2016. Furthermore, personal interactions between the author and first and second- generation Malayalee expatriates belonging mainly to lower and middle classes have also informed the analysis and arguments presented here. Participants in this research were mostly in their sixties, seventies or eighties. Some had continuously lived in the Gulf countries, while others had left the region after spending thirty to forty years there. Some of the accounts have been published in regional newspapers and popular magazines in Malayalam.

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] 18 (27). AWT/48 Treatment of Indian Employees in Bahrain 1948/ File No. F-18-AWT/48.
[20] Seccombe, "Labour Migration to the Arabian Gulf," and Seccombe and Lawless, "Foreign Worker Dependence in the Gulf, and the International Oil Companies: 1910-50."
[21] Gennaro Errichiello, "Foreign Workforce in the Arab Gulf States (1930-1950): Migration Patterns and Nationality Clauses," *International Migration Review* 46, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 389-413.

Kerala's Gulf Connection

Malabar, the northern part of Kerala, has historically played a pivotal role in the wide network of Indian Ocean trade due to the high-value goods it possessed and exchanged.[22] Recent archaeological excavations at Pattanam in South India have brought forth tangible evidence of Kerala's trade linkages with the Gulf region from the first century AD.[23] Evidence suggests that Arab traders frequently sailed back and forth between regions since that period. These journeys led to the development of diasporic communities of Arabs in various parts of Kerala, especially in Malabar, which was the hub of Arab trade in the region. The spread of Islam in the Indian Ocean region further fostered Kerala's connection with the Arab communities of the Gulf region. By the twelfth century, a system of interlinked trading networks - in which the Malabar Coast played an important role - had been established. The migration of substantial merchant communities significantly contributed to the development of trade in Malabar. This long-distance trade also necessitated the presence of on-site agents from the Gulf region to represent the interests of traders sending goods from distant locations in the port towns of Kerala.[24]

Ibn Batuta, a fourteenth-century Arab traveller, was the first writer to give a detailed description of the settlements of Arabs from the Gulf region in various parts of Kerala.[25] *The Keralolpatti Chronicles* on the history of evolution of Kerala narrate an interesting story of two brothers from Muscat who were instrumental in the making of the city of Calicut in Malabar.[26] There are repeated references to Ceṛamān Peṛumāḷ, the king of Kerala, who became the first known convert to Islam from the Indian subcontinent. According to these accounts, Ceṛamān Peṛumāḷ travelled to Mecca and finally settled in Oman and is reported to have sent messengers to propagate the new faith along the west coast of South India.[27] In the middle of the nineteenth century, Sayyid Fadl, a scholar belonging to the family of Sayyids of Hadhramaut, was deported from Malabar by the British administration on the grounds of his rebellion against the colonial rule. He subsequently sailed with his family and companions to Jeddah, before eventually moving to the Dhofar province of Oman, where he became the province's governor under the Ottoman rule.[28] Around the same time, Mayinkutty Keyi, a trader-turned-

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[22] Sinnapah Arasaratnam, *Maritime India in the Seventeenth Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 39.

[23] P. J. Cherian, *Pattanam: South India's Mohanjedaro* (Trivandrum: Kerala Council for Historical Research, 2006).

[24] Arasaratnam, *Maritime India in the Seventeenth Century*, 39.

[25] It is clear from the writings of Batuta that the Qadi (judge) and Khatib (orator) in many of the coastal towns were from Oman. Quoted by H.A.R Gibb, *Ibn Battuta: Travels in Asia and Africa* (London: Robert M. Mc. Bride and Co., 1929), 14-16.

[26] Keralolpatti Chronicles cited in MGS. Narayanan, *Calicut: The City of Truth Revisited* (Calicut: University of Calicut Publications, 2006), 66.

[27] Stephen Dale, *The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922: Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 112-120.

[28] Anne Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860-1925* (London: Routledge, 2003), 79-84.

scholar from Malabar had built a shelter (later known to be *Keyi Rubat*) in Mecca to provide free boarding to pilgrims from the region.[29]

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries trade ties flourished further with the frequent trade of dates from Oman. These trade linkages brought about cultural and material commonalities and exchanges across these regions in areas such as food, agriculture, and clothing. The increased presence of Keralites in the Gulf, on the other hand, was only recorded in the middle of the twentieth century,[30] although there are documents proving prior migration of traders and Islamic scholars to Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

Onley, in his work on Indian communities in the Gulf, cites the region's relatively hard and inhospitable climate as a possible reason for the deterrence of communities in Malabar from settling in large numbers, despite the strong trade linkages between Malabar ports and the Gulf.[31] However, the early Gulf migrants were mainly from the century-old cosmopolitan port towns of Kerala.[32] The social and religious fabric of these port towns emerged out of the exchange of people, ideas, and goods between Kerala and the Arab world.[33] Thus, the first few waves of post-oil migration followed the traditional pattern of merchants from Kerala who depended mainly on the sea-routes to reach the Gulf coasts.[34]

The first wave was constituted by the migration of people who crossed the Arabian Sea through Bombay, Karachi and Gwadar ports in the 1940s and 50s and arrived to different parts of the Gulf without any proper travel documents.[35] The second wave was composed of another set of luck-seekers who set sail to the Gulf inspired by the "rags-to-rich" stories of the pioneers. This second generation mainly resorted to country crafts and *dhows*, ferrying goods between the port towns of the south western coasts of India and the Gulf.[36] Kasim, who moved to the UAE in the early 1960s following his uncle, narrates:

> My uncle, who was one of the early migrants, left Kerala for Arabia. He spends much of his time describing the experiences he had while travelling to Dubai. He buys perfume-drenched attires and foreign confectionaries. The Smell of Gulf spread through the gifts my uncle used to bring and attracted me like nothing before…The first-generation Gulf migrants were the people who brought the culture of wearing pants to our village. We came to know from them that this

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[29] "Mecca Resting Place to Fetch Thousands of Crores for Keyi Family of Kannur," *The Indian Express*, 22 April 2013.
[30] Modern outmigration of Malayalees starts with their journey to Burma, Ceylon and Singapore in the colonial period. Later on, big cities like Bombay (known currently as Mumbai) and Calcutta in India became the prime ports of call for individual and collective migration.
[31] James Onley, "Indian Communities in the Gulf, c. 1500-1947" in Lawrence G. Potter, ed., *The Persian Gulf in Modern Times* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
[32] Two medieval ports of Kerala, Calicut and Ponnani were the two major ports of embarkation for migrants destined for Dubai and Muscat.
[33] Abbas Panakkal, "Beypūṟinum Sūrinum Idayil," *Gulf Focus* 2, no. 2 (April 2015): 28-34.
[34] Rahman, *Pravasiyude Yudhangal*, 2-4.
[35] Manu Rahman, "Lōncil Pōya Kēṟaḷam," *Chandrika Weekly* 4, no.11 (May 2012): 36.
[36] Rahman, *Pravasiyude Yudhangal*, 2-4.

practice was an innovation introduced by the Europeans and educated Arabs… the local[s] do not have this habit. Instead of pants, they put on knee-length gowns called kandura and abaya. Although he does not talk much, he becomes talkative when it comes to narrating the happy state of affairs in the Gulf. Dubai, according to him, was a good place for making money for those who work hard. I was further moved by his description of the Gulf in a letter he wrote to me: "… [N]ice place to stay and work, currency with high value against Indian Rupees, food in abundance, no scarcity of water, Arabs are generous. Once you are in their good book, you have a bright future in front."[37]

Shoukkath, another early migrant belonging to the second wave narrates a similar story:

I was in Bombay working in a provision store. I used to listen to the stories of people who returned from the Gulf on vacation narrating their experience of travel by Arab dhows and the happy state of affairs in the Gulf. I admired their adventures, and of course the monetary gains they made out of migration. Inspired by such stories, I took a decision to leave Bombay for the Gulf.[38]

The migration of 'undocumented workers' continued until the early 1970s, by which point the visa requirements and the search for "illegal migrants" in the Gulf states increased.[39] Moreover, the 1970s witnessed a massive exodus of Malayalees to the Gulf through legally approved means of recruitment.

Narrations of Travel
Memories and life-stories constitute the two main types of narratives used in this section. They relate to themes such as early migrants' socio-economic reasons for leaving, adventurous travel, their "new lives" in the Gulf, and their perceptions of the society and the state in their host countries. These narratives suggest that the economic development in the Gulf generated by the oil boom and the economic slump in the state of Kerala due to the crisis of agricultural economy were the major pull and push factors that fostered the migratory process in the 1950s and 60s.[40] Pressured by prevailing poverty, many in the rural areas found "illegal" migration to the Gulf countries a viable chance of finding better job prospects and a more decent life. Kunjabdulla's experience is illustrative of this opportunity:

This was in the late 1960s. The land reforms[41] and the consequent distribution of our lands to the poor people made our family paupers. We struggled a

[37] Interview with P. K. Kazim by Manu Rahman, *Chandrika Weekly*, 26 May to 1 June 2012, 37-40.
[38] Interview with Shoukkath on September 12, 2014.
[39] Seccombe, "Labour Migration to the Arabian Gulf," 3-5.
[40] Prakash, "Impact of Foreign Remittances," 3210.
[41] The land reforms began in Kerala in the 1957. The Legislative Assembly in Kerala passed subsequent land reform bills in 1960, 1963, 1964, and 1969. But the historical land reform act, which put an end to the feudal system and ensured the rights of the tenants on land, came into force on 1 January 1970.

lot to [make both ends meet] and even hand to mouth existence was in trouble. Unskilled and unemployed youth from previously well-off families were very reluctant to take low-salaried jobs in Kerala. "Doing the same in the Gulf is not an issue as no one knows your identity," my brother-in-law advised me. "With the money you earn, you can certainly retain all the fortunes you lost in the past."[42]

While economic reasons feature predominantly in migrants' narratives, some also disclose other important social factors. For example, the story of Balan, an early migrant from the Ezhava-a Hindu lower caste-community, points to the caste-hierarchy in the job market in India and the inaccessibility of "decent" jobs to lower castes both in the public and private sectors as the factors that compelled him to migrate:

> It was the extreme poverty in the family that led me to think of migrating to Persia[43] in the late 1960s. The success stories of first generation Gulf migrants by that time had inspired many to join the bandwagon. The decision to leave India was taken after many unsuccessful efforts to get a "decent" job in Bombay. The situation was very grim, only upper caste Nairs through their caste/community networks managed to get "good" jobs elsewhere in India.[44]

Other accounts suggest the existence of yet another group whose decision to migrate was completely or partly independent of socio-economic compulsions. They were primarily encouraged by personal ambitions and aspirations. Based on this plurality of accounts, one can argue that the "promise of good life" may not be the sole impelling reason behind migrants' decisions. This was particularly the case with Abdu Punnilath, who I met in a village in Kerala leading a post-retirement life after spending forty years in the UAE and Qatar. For him, it was his "longing to see new worlds and experience new cultures" that led him to set out on the journey.[45] Moreover, searching for missing siblings, relatives or friends, or accompanying a spouse were also among the major personal reasons for such journeys. Aboobacker, who reached Ajman in 1963, narrates his story of entering Dubai "illegally" with the prime intention of finding three brothers from his village:

> After reaching Ajman, I initially spent quite a lot of time trying to find the three brothers from my village who had arrived there much earlier. Following an extensive search, I finally met them in Ajman. The eldest, Abdulkader, went missing from my village of South Malabar sometime in the late 1920s. He left when he was in his twenties in order to make the journey across the

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[42] Interview with P. P. Kunhabdulla who migrated to the UAE in the late 1960s and spent almost thirty years in Dubai, by Manu Rahman, *Chandirka Weekly* 4, no.11 (May 2012), 38-41.
[43] In Kerala the whole of the Persian Gulf was glossed as Persia.
[44] Interview with M. S. Balan by the author on 22 May 2014.
[45] Interview with Abdu Punnilath by the author held on 2 September 2014.

subcontinent. He first moved to Lahore via Bombay where he worked as a tea shop boy, a porter, and a construction worker for twenty years. He eventually landed at Mutrah Port of Muscat through Gwadar[46] at the end of 1940s. He then moved from Muscat to the Zubara region of Qatar, where the ruling al-Thani family was then based. There he became the bodyguard of one of the princes in the family. Abdulkader was physically well-built and therefore attracted the attention of sheikhs in the royal family. But his habit of smoking hashish led to his removal from his job. Once he pulled out a rifle from the armoury and fired aimlessly. Subsequently, he was thrown out of Qatar and arrived in Ajman in the mid 1950s.[47]

The theme of a "better family life" as a core motivation for the migrants' journey is evident in the accounts of Aishabi and Souda both of whom spent around thirty years in Dubai and Ajman. This "search," however, is grounded in significantly different expectations in each account. Despite the painful experience of travel, both describe the possibility of joining their spouses and starting a new family life as a privilege that was not enjoyed by all:

My first journey to Dubai was in 1964 though my husband reached there almost ten years earlier, via Iran. He was running an electrical contracting company in Ajman since the middle of [the] 1950s. In the 1960s, UAE witnessed a massive inflow of "wives" from Kerala accompanying their husbands. This was previously a preserve of "properly recruited" highly paid Syrian Christian and Nair teachers, secretaries and managers from South Kerala who had a privileged position among the South Asian expatriates.[48]

I was one of the privileged few Malayali wives who could accompany their husbands in the UAE. After serving as a civilian clerk in the Trucial Oman States Office for almost four years, my husband moved to Dubai in search of a better job. Only a miniscule few Indian husbands had kept their families with them. Among the Malayalees, only high-salaried Nairs from South Kerala and Syrian Christians from Central part were part of this club. Indian associations in the Gulf were also meant solely for such families.[49]

The favouritism mentioned in the testimonies above was a prevalent practice in the recruitment of educated youth from southern parts of Kerala from the 1920s onwards by the British Indian Administration. The employment possibility, which aimed to fill administrative positions in the expanding civil service in the Gulf,[50] was confined solely

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46 Gwadar Port in the Balochistan province of Pakistan.
47 Interviewed by the author on 18 May 2014.
48 Interviewed by the author on 15 August 2014.
49 Interviewed by the author on 15 August 2014.
50 Onley, "Indian Communities in the Gulf."

to some affluent groups in their community/caste networks. The educated upper caste Hindu Nairs and Syrian Christians form the Southern districts successfully utilised the situation when the oil-rich Middle Eastern states desperately required skilled and professional human resources in the early 1950s.[51] This pattern of migration persisted for a long period as the state-owned oil companies depended on Western companies to recruit their workers from India. Private business establishments also followed suit and hired personnel from South Kerala in large numbers.[52]

The discriminatory practices led to the increased membership of educated Muslims in Kerala in community organizations, which regularly submitted memorandums to rulers in Saudi Arabia. The most prominent example of these memoranda belonged to K. M. Moualvi, one of the pioneers of the Salafi movement in the state of Kerala in 1959. In his memorandum, Moualvi criticised the policy of recruitment of Malayalee Christians to the Holy Land as an un-Islamic practice, advising the King to address the issue. He suggested:

> There is a large number of educated and skilled Salafis who are competent enough to - in their stead [Christians from Kerala] - serve the "Islamic nation." Their recruitment to the key positions in the newly established oil-companies would be helpful for a nation that has embarked on the mission of protecting Islamic Sharia from the concerted move against it by the infidels.[53]

Although some Muslims from northern parts of Kerala participated in the early phase of migration, their participation in the process of formal recruitment was insignificant until the 1960s, when the Gulf States began requiring large-scaled semi-skilled and unskilled labour in order to cater their fast-growing oil-based economies.[54] Given the historical-religious connection they had with the Muslims of the region, Keralite Muslims soon gained an advantage over others in the 1970s.[55]

With regards to "undocumented" Malayalee migrants, Khor Fakkan (presently in the UAE) became the first port of call due to the relaxed nature of its immigration laws.[56] Moreover, the local population was also receptive to the South Asian immigrants. This hospitality was partly due to the region's historical, commercial, and cultural connection with the Malabar Coast. Most local families had, at the very least, the experience of voyages to Calicut via *dhows*.[57] The inter-regional cultural exchanges had also resulted in newly-formed familial ties as many men in Khor Fakkan had married women from Calicut.[58]

[51] R. E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends* (London, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1991), 322.

[52] Onley, "Indian Communities in the Gulf."

[53] K. K. Muhammed Abdul Kareem, *K.M. Moulavi: Jeevacahritram* (Kozhicode: Yuvatha Book House, 2000), 134.

[54] Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*, 32.

[55] Ibid., 322.

[56] M. C. A Nasser, "Paṛadeṣatinte Ādima Mudra," *Gulf Madhyamam* (Special Issue on Gulf Migration from Kerala) 3, no.1 (2012): 8-12.

[57] Ibid., 12.

[58] Ibid.

Omani sailors likewise married women from major port towns in Malabar, mainly Calicut, which used to be the hub of maritime trade during the medieval and early modern periods.[59] In 1976, the Omani administration began to regulate such marriages.[60]

The above narratives represent individual and collective hardship arising from "illegal" migration and illustrate the nature of people's movement in the Arabian Sea during that period. The narratives that follow offer clues to the manner in which trafficking was conducted:

> My journey in the early 1960 was in an *uru*[61] importing dates to Calicut. This *uru* was owned by an Arab who had marital ties with Calicut through his second wife. An agent approached me with an offer to take me to the Gulf at a cost of Rs. 400 (roughly around USD 6). I don't remember when exactly we started and how many passengers were there in that ship. What I remember clearly is that fourteen passengers could not complete their journey as they died on the way. It took twenty-two days to reach Khor Fakkan cost. We saw throughout the journey the *srank*[62] struggling to hide *uru* from the coast guards patrolling in the sea.[63]

> I started the journey from Bombay in a ship transporting onions to Dubai. There was a special chamber in most of the cargo and passenger ships designed for those who did not have proper documents. After nine days of troubled journey, we reached Khor Fakkan. No one was there to receive us. We entered the older part of the port town and found refuge in a nearby mosque. People doing *salah* at the mosque offered us some money which helped us survive for almost a week. We were tired and disoriented. A local Arab took us to his house, fed us and gave directions to Dubai. We travelled the entire distance on foot.[64]

> I set out on the journey from Bombay via a ship transporting onions to Dubai in the early 1960s. Twenty-eight people boarded that ship along with me. The scarcity of food during the journey made us open the onion sacks and eat them. We were used to sleep[ing] on those sacks despite their discomfort that troubled us a lot.[65]

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[59] V. D. D' Souza, "Status Group Among the Mappila Muslims on the South-West Coast of India," in *Social Stratification among Muslims in India* ed. Imtias Ahmed (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 21-48.
[60] Shinoj K. Shamsuddin, "Calicut-Oman Marital Linkages", *Gulf Madhyamam* 3, no.1 (2012): 66-69.
[61] A country craft, Beypore in Calicut has historically been famous for building it for cargo movements in the Indian Ocean region.
[62] The captain of the boats and country crafts.
[63] Alawi Haji, interviewed by the author on 26 May 2014.
[64] Interview with Balan.
[65] Interview with Kazim.

At that time, the "illegal" launches were expanding transporting an increasing number of young men from Bombay. My journey was in a smuggling vessel which unlike others was very fast. Because of my acquaintance with the people who shuttled and smuggled goods between Bombay and Dubai, I could travel for free.[66]

Unlike the subsequent waves of migration, first-wave migrants had numerous stories about the narrow escapes they experienced during the journey, the risk taken to settle in, as well as their success in host countries. Remembrance of a collective misfortune features predominantly in the narrations. In particular, migrants found solace in memorising tragic travel experiences. The experience of Umar, an expatriate labourer who lived in Ras al-Khaima and Dubai, details an untoward incident. The memories of this incident were shared, albeit expressed differently, by many other migrants. However, the incident, which was significant in magnitude and alerted the sheikhdoms of the massive wave of immigration from India in "illegal" launches, has not been recorded in the documented history of migration from Kerala to the Gulf countries.

Our launch from Bombay anchored at a secret place close to Khor Fakkan. Bedouins offered us some special items along with *aleesa*,[67] dates and water. We continued our journey to Dubai, but our further movement was blocked by a Dubai Coast Guard ship. The deck of the ship was full of armed guards who were pointing their guns at us. "Hands up…bring your launch close to the ship," the guards kept giving instructions through a loudspeaker. "Where are you from?" they asked. "We are from Bombay, this is actually a Mangalore-bound launch," the captain of the ship, a Gujarati, told the guards. "Himar" [donkey], what followed was a set of filthy words in Arabic. Dubai police arrested some of the passengers and transferred them to their ship. The launch was tied to the ship and both cruised along the direction of the Coast Guard Ship with the same pace. To my surprise, no one got scared. Though we were being taken to the Jail, we thought the situation in [a] Dubai jail would be far better than what we had faced. But what happened was a tragedy…after half an hour cruise, the rope that tied the ship and the launch broke and the launch turned upside down within a few minutes. Rescue operations by the Coast Guard went in vain and more than thirty people were killed.[68]

During my field research, I met two more people who, along with Umar, experienced a narrow escape. The first had a miraculous escape but did not wish to share his story. The second participant narrated his story somewhat differently than the one above, though the description of the "mishap" remained similar. While common threads connected the two memories, the highly-personalised manner in which they were narrated

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[66] Interview with Shoukkath.
[67] A dessert popular in the Gulf and Malabar as well.
[68] Interview with C. H. Umar by Moidhu Azhiyur, *Chandrika Weekly*, 28 April to 4 May 2012, 38-41.

distinguished the accounts. Moreover, although the incident was referenced by many participants, none could remember the exact date. Juxtaposing different testimonies, however, reveals that the incident occurred around 1965.

The migrants' narratives are fragmented and contain "selective" segments of their memories. Moreover, the absence of written material and supporting archival sources renders the task of verifying and reinterpreting these accounts difficult. Nonetheless, these narratives, as forms of oral history, cover a wide range of issues that are discussed from various perspectives. As such, the forgotten or partially-remembered segments, become less significant. The narratives instead open a window into the migrants' emotions and readings of events. For example, nearly all of the narratives reveal a great deal of emotional conflict that has been associated with the departure from Kerala and the state of alienation in a foreign land:

> An efficient postal system came into being in Qatar only in the late 1960s. It was only then that I could re-establish contact with friends and relatives in Kerala through letters. My parents and siblings had no news of me for a long time. Having heard many stories of drowning launches in the Arabian Sea, my parents had even reached the conclusion that I might have been killed in such a mishap. They even observed some post-death rituals for their missing son.[69]

In addition to the traumatic experiences of travel, some memories also shed light on the movements of "undocumented" people transgressing the strict lines of legality in order to live and work. One can see that violations of law become the norm, and disobedience and unlawful entries are transformed into people's normal survival mechanisms in a foreign land. In practice, the host governments generally ignored such irregularities, and even at times facilitated them. The following experiences are demonstrative of this:

> We landed at Sohar port after cruising almost forty-one days in a big vessel called *Kwajah Moidheen*, exporting spices from Calicut to Muscat in May 1969. Though the locals informed the Omani police about our "illegal" entry, they did not take serious note of it as it was not an unusual thing at that time. To our surprise, they did not ask much… just enquired about our further plans and greeted us, "let the desert bring luck to you." They helped us cross the border of Trucial States. We headed for Sharjah, where many friends of us lived, but set off in the desert without any clues about the direction. The luck came in the form of a truck transporting watermelons to Sharjah.[70]

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[69] Interview with Abdul Kader Haji alias Hajikka who spent altogether 40 years in Qatar, as narrated in P. P. Kabeer, "Idankayyil Korthunirthiya Oonnuvadi," *Gulf Madhyamam* 3, no. 2 (2012): 96-98.
[70] Interview with M. V. Kunhi Mohamed held on 2 August 2014.

I don't remember the exact date but it was towards the end of 1960s. We started our journey in a small launch, but on the way moved to a bigger one. When we reached the Iranian coast, the guards covered the launch from all sides and asked us to surrender. We then greeted them with *Assalam Alaikkum* to make the guards convinced that we are not pirates. Seeing our pathetic situation, the guards gave us water and dates and warned us of piracy-prone areas ahead.[71]

Despite their unofficial and haphazard status, most of these journeys did not attract any unfriendly or intolerant reactions by the host states. Their movements never posed any real threat to the state. Sometimes, the receiving states even encouraged such human exchange as a way to compensate the lack of human resources available to work in their booming oil economies.

Alternative Accounts of Nations' Past

The second set of narratives contain accounts of early migrants who had no role in the social and political process in the host countries, but, as silent spectators, were witnesses to nation-building processes in countries like the UAE and Qatar. There is a convergence of histories, myths, and realities in the retelling of the past. These narratives succinctly illustrate some of the complex events that the societies of the Gulf states have experienced. However, the freedom of the migrant population to share their experiences is restricted by various sorts of political sensibilities. Shoukkath's testimonial, for instance, demonstrates a deep transformation affecting the relation between the rulers and ruled in the Sheikhdom of Ajman. His experience is illustrative of how the symbolic languages of family, clan, and religious ideology, which the rulers used to gain legitimacy and support, were replaced by modern means.

Sheikh Rashid,[72] the then ruler of Ajman, was our regular customer. He came to my Indian restaurant with his children, friends and a battalion of Bedouin bodyguards. He was very fond of Mughal food which he ordered for special parties thrown at the palace. The delicious food served at my restaurant brought me close to the ruler. He became the *kafeel* (sponsor) of a chain of supermarkets which I started later. He also supported my endeavour to spread the chain to neighbouring towns, provided me with all the facilities to start one in Manama[73] and deployed two cops to control the mad rush of the locals inside. The security arrangements were done mainly for handling poor people hailing from remote villages. For them my shop offered a new experience of shopping. Whenever I was in need of money, he discouraged me to approach the bank. I loaned huge amounts from him. He maintained a strong dislike towards bank interests as it was un-Islamic. Sheikh Rashid continued to follow

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[71] Interview with Abdul Kader Haji.
[72] Sheikh Rashid ibn Humaid Al-Nuaimi, who ruled Ajman from 1928 to 1981.
[73] One of the districts in Ajman.

a very down to earth life until his death in 1981. My establishments enjoyed immunity from *kafalat*.[74] But this was not the case with his sons, who were Western-educated. Though I had taken care of them as kids, my access to them was limited and I felt complete alienation after Sheikh Rashid's death.[75]

Memories of people who were close to the ruling families in some of the Sheikhdoms in the UAE bear testimony to the minute sociological changes to state affairs based on kinship, family ties, and other forms of personalised relations. One can also find references to the rulers' attempts to transform the traditional political structure around the theme of a "modern state" in these narrations. All of the early migrants interviewed mentioned the changes in socialisation that transpired between the ruling families and local population during the 1970s. The experiences of Alawi Haji and Mohammed reaffirm Shoukkath's depiction of the transition from "traditional" to "modern:"

Towards the beginning of 1965, I entered business in Dubai where I faced fierce competition from Sindhis and Iranians. They owned most of the department stores while *wakala*[76] shops and cafeterias were run by Malayalees. I could manage the business with my little knowledge of Urdu, which was widely used by Sindhi Bhatias and Pakistanis. Because of their historical affinity with Malabar, Arabs were very friendly. Shiekh Rashid[77] used to come to Diera market where my shop was situated. It was not for the purpose of shopping. Rather he roamed around mingling closely with the shopkeepers. He behaved like an ordinary person, paying visit to the restaurants owned by Indian expatriates for [the purpose of] tasting Indian food. He used to share his experience of visiting Bombay in the 1940s. But that became a rare scene in the 1970s.[78]

In Fujairah (in late 1960s) no one from our group had proper occupation. Most of us lived in tents or portable cabins. Even though most of the people in our group were "undocumented workers," Arabs treated us nicely and gave us petty jobs for survival. We had regular interactions with the Fujairah Sheikh.[79] Regardless of our status, he mingled with all foreign labourers in Fujairah at that time. But the situation changed all of a sudden after the establishment of the UAE.[80]

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[74] Sponsorship money.
[75] Interview with Shoukath.
[76] Petty off-license shops.
[77] Sheikh Rashid ibn Said Al-Maktoum, the former ruler of Dubai (1958-1990).
[78] Interview with Alawi Haji.
[79] Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad al Sharqi who ruled Fujairah from 1942-75.
[80] Interview with Mohammed, who lived in Fujairah and Dubai for almost two decades, by the author on 13 May 2014.

The difficulties faced by migrants while attempting to adjust to the local conditions are reflective of the transition of the Arab Gulf countries from traditional to modern states. Some narratives specifically offer accounts of the changing nature of governance with the introduction of elaborate bureaucracies, policing strategies, and mechanisms of immigration control.

The scholarship on the post-colonial nation-building process in the Arab Gulf states generally focuses on local or European elites. Little attention has been paid to the experience of expatriate workers. In fact, mainstream literature seeks to negate their agency by emphasising their inability to initiate any action independent of the locals and denying their contribution to the social and political changes that transformed their host societies. In this context, individual and collective memories cannot be considered inert and passive, but as bearers of great potential to provide alternative historical narratives. Some accounts demonstrate the creation of a complex state with multifarious government apparatuses as the combined result of an increase in oil revenues and efforts by ruling families to consolidate their power. Mohammed's experience points to the rulers' attempts to regulate migrations by making borders non-porous. Hamza's narrative, who was affiliated with the first group of "officially" recruited "educated" workers in the Gulf, sketches out the changing nature of the region's employment sector:

> Towards the end of 1960s, I moved from Khor Fakkan to Fujairah. By then, the movements of undocumented labourers had become very difficult. There was police patrolling and many of my friends were detained. Many of those who did not have documents were deported to Dubai, where the rules were far more liberal. The immigration department started taking stringent actions against those who arrived in launches from India. By then the "illegal" migration from India had also come to a halt.[81]

> I was among the first batch of migrants from northern Kerala recruited through the official channel. I joined the Dubai National Air Transport Association in 1968 and personally witnessed the growth of Dubai Airport. The rapid development of Dubai happened in the next ten to fifteen years. This change was slightly reflected in the attitude of the locals. Their spending pattern changed drastically. In government offices and public-sector companies, first generation local Arabs were replaced by the western-educated youngsters. However, top level positions in many sectors like airlines were still composed of Europeans.[82]

The feeling of social and cultural alienation was equally shared by the early migrants from various backgrounds. For them, the fear of loss of identity created a profound sense of insecurity and a sharpened awareness of marginality. In this context, the formation and membership in informal associations offered them a sense of political identity and

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[81] Interview with Mohammed.
[82] Interview with Hamsa Valiyakath by the author on 22 August 2014.

compensated the lack of opportunity for participation in the national politics of their host countries. Balan's memories shed light on the social life of migrants from Kerala who constituted a small minority. These migrants, who arrived in the Gulf states at very low rates before the 1970s, formed informal associations, but faced difficulty in expressing themselves openly:

> Malayalees who lived with me were mostly from poor backgrounds but were politically active. We all were communists but feared the consequence of expressing it openly. We worked clandestinely among the Malayalee migrants. In weekly secret gatherings, we shared political news reaching the Gulf through regular letters of friends from Kerala. Given the subtle and secret mode of our operation and our limited reach, our politics did not find any resonance among the nationals. This situation continued until the 1970s, when we launched a cultural organization remotely affiliated to the Communist Party in Kerala.[83]

The perceptions of early migrants are generally marked by a sense of alienation, which is deeply rooted in their relationships with the locals. Migrants' narratives invariably touch upon questions of group identity, alienation, and a sense of powerlessness in a foreign land. This sense of alienation ultimately resulted in the formation of an "imagined nation" that was manifested through informal associations of Malayalee labourers that offered the possibility of escaping the political realities of the host country. Alawi Haji shares a detailed account of such informal associational life in the Gulf:

> In Sharjah, we, a big battalion of Malayalees, lived together in special types of houses called *murabba*.[84] Within two or three years, the place I stayed in became a strong Malayalee bastion with a massive inflow of people from Malabar coming by urus that transported coir and fish oil from Calicut. We met each other every evening and talking about Kerala politics was our major pastime. Only in the 1970s Indian associations came into being. Before that there was a weekly informal gathering for people from Kerala. Small restaurants and cafeterias owned by Malayalees were the venues of such meetings. Reading letters aloud and sharing news from the villages in Kerala was a much-valued activity.[85]

While some narratives are primarily concerned with individual experiences of difficulties or personal career success stories, they nonetheless entail clues to the wider socio-economic context.

Another set of narratives attempts to reconstruct the experience of accommodation in the host societies by highlighting survival strategies. They map individual and collective experiences of exclusion from various sorts of spatial, economic, social, and

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[83] Interview with Balan.
[84] Small thatched huts.
[85] Interview with Alawi Haji.

political spheres. Emerging themes in such narratives include spatial segregation, living patterns, sharing of spaces, which sometimes led to petty quarrels, as well as intensified forms of sociability created by spatial segregation. The narratives of Balan, Alawi Haji, and Kazim expose a plethora of issues, ranging from the various types of hierarchies that existed in the employment sector to spatial segregation:

> My first job in Dubai was of a baby sitter with a British family. The salary was around Dhs. 100. As I gained further experience in this field, I was able to earn [an] increasingly large and regular salary. We (Indian and Pakistani expatriate labourers) stayed in tents, while Englishmen and elite Arabs lived in independent villas. Among the Malayalees, those who were employed in Sheikhly palaces were the most affluent ones. Though as tea boys, cooks and house drivers they still constituted the lower strata of the hierarchy. They nonetheless enjoyed a special position because of their "sheikhly" connections.[86]

> Most of my friends were in their twenties and engaged in stevedoring work at the Sharjah port. Previous experience gained in Calicut helped many Mappila *khalasi*[87] outshine other nationalities in their profession, especially Pakistanis who were physically well-built. I got the job of cook for an Englishman which was the most prestigious and much sought-after job a Malayalee could ever dream of. My first salary was around Rs.100 (around USD 1.5). The salary of a higher government official in Kerala at that time was less than Rs. 80 (just above USD 1). The late 1960s witnessed the arrival of educated and skilled migrants from India. Relatively high salary was the major pull factor.[88]

> We, labourers from various parts of India and Pakistan stayed in *chopadas*.[89] Floors were barren and 10-15 people slept together in a long row on mats of grass, which sometimes led to irritation and petty quarrels. I eventually moved to Dubai where I survived the first five years without any documents. The destination of the majority of unskilled labourers from Malabar in Dubai was small restaurants and cafeterias where people used to work and live.[90]

The testimonials of Aishabi, Abdul Rahiman and Dastagir narrated below reflect an attempt to interpret the process of nation-building in the Gulf countries in an alternative way by early South Asian migrants. Although they are inspired by their own personal experiences, they function as vehicles to convey an understanding of the Gulf's past as experienced - individually or collectively - by the South Asian

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[86] Interview with Balan.
[87] This term refers to Muslim dockyard workers and lascars working at ports and dockyards in Malabar.
[88] Interview with Alawi Haji.
[89] Small makeshift houses built mainly of metal or plastic sheets.
[90] Interview with Kazim.

expatriates. These narratives may not follow any chronological orders or consistent geographical locations. Furthermore, they may be partial and even contradictory. In some occasions, an event has more than one version. However, the narratives voice the experiences of groups that have been excluded from political power and dominant social discourses. They therefore revive the sense of agency of "subalterns" by stressing their "crucial" contributions to the dynamics of historical change as spectators, witnesses, or victims.

My first journey to Ajman was in 1964 though my husband reached the Gulf almost ten years before me via Iran. He was running an electrical contracting company in Ajman since the middle of 1950s that was supposed to be the first one in the emirate. He slowly spread the business to Sharjah and Dubai. With extensive supports from the then rulers of three emirates, Ajman, Sharjah and Dubai, he started many innovative ventures including starting a cinema in Dubai and a star hotel in Ajman. Although he initially started with Hindi movies, he slowly turned to screening South Indian films in the middle of 1960s. These films were usually in Malayalam language but with Arabic or Hindi subtitles in order to attract cinema-goers cutting across the regional lines. The royal family had generously promoted his business projects by providing local sponsorship, land, and other incentives. Simultaneous to that, he was also engaged in construction and real estate fields which were really in their teething stage in the UAE. The ruler of Sharjah was the *kafeel* (local sponsor) for most of his endeavours. I remember my husband had played an important role introducing modern modes of entrepreneurship among the locals and the immigrants alike.[91]

When I reached Fujairah in the early 1970s, that place was a humble fishing coast, totally cut off from modernity. Modern technologies were still to be used in fishing. With experiences acquired from Kerala, I introduced to them new techniques of fishing. Initially, my innovations were not taken seriously by the locals. They even called me *majnun* or mad. But appreciations started pouring in once the techniques proved successful. Many emulated these techniques. The locals even gave me the title of *muwatan* or national as a mark of honour. With this conferred *watani* status, officials at the immigration advised me to apply for naturalization but my sentimental ties with Kerala prevented me from doing so.[92]

My father reached Doha in a cargo ship from Bombay in 1948. After trying his luck in various fields, he started a tea shop called *Bismillah* in Suq Vafiq, which

[91] Interview with Aishabi.
[92] As narrated in A. Rasheedudiin, "Avoli Vetta," *Gulf Madhyaman* 3, no. 2 (2012): 86-88.

was then a petty market lying close to the port without much crowd, shops or big buildings. His experience of running a tea shop in Bombay helped setting up a similar one in Doha. The initial success in the endeavour tempted him to start a hotel in 1954. That was supposed to be the first hotel in Doha and one of the few double-storied buildings in the country. He enjoyed the generous support of two members of the royal family in this venture. British administration also helped him by giving permission to recruit personnel from various South Asian countries. Our hotel was a new experience for many in the country. It became a major landmark in Doha and emerged as a prominent socializing space for people from India, Pakistan, and Iran.[93]

Conclusion

The narratives analysed in this piece are not mere reinventions of the past. The memories and life stories of migrant workers, a group who has left no written records of their experiences, reveal a segment in the history of the Gulf states, which has been buried by grand national narratives. They succinctly illustrate how South Asian labourers in the Gulf can produce diverse descriptions and explanations for the same historical episodes discussed in "standard" history texts, as well as expose others that are altogether absent from existing historiographies.

By offering an alternative to the formally recorded histories, migrants' narratives fall under the category of "histories from below," with the intertwining of historical events with "subaltern" renderings. Early migrants are aware of their limitations as expatriate workers with only a distinct domain in which to live and operate. Barring certain exceptions, the dilemmas of early migrants reflect their wish to be socially, but not politically, integrated into the "new nations" that emerged in the Gulf. Their discourse, therefore, is visibly marked by selective appropriations, in which they have a partial and fragmentary relationship with the host "nation."

The post-oil migration from Kerala to the Gulf countries has created a plethora of narratives, which in most cases, cannot be assessed by the parameters set by "standard history." The traditional histories of the region, based mainly on colonial records, show a tendency to omit such memories generated by the expatriates. Because these memories fall outside the boundaries of the nation-state, they tend to be either omitted or accommodated within the national histories of the Gulf countries. However, these narratives are very significant for their attempt to re-conceptualise the history of the Gulf, which has previously been told exclusively through the lens of elite actors within specific territorial units.

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[93] Life history of Konganamveettil Hamza as narrated by his son, Dastagir, in Raees. K., "Malayali Hotel in Qatar History," *Gulf Focus* 2, no. 14 (February, 2015): 10-15.
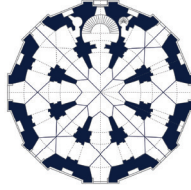
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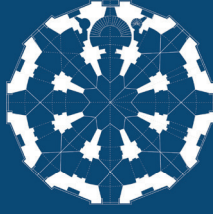
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