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BRANDING THE ENEMY: THE "KHARIJITE" LABEL AND THE LEGITIMATION OF STATE POWER

by

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Within the Islamic world, the religious past often plays a formative role in our understanding of contemporary issues. One such rhetorical idiom from the past, the label "Kharijite," has been, and is still, used as a pejorative by both state and non-state actors against myriad Islamist organizations and entities. Through an intensively researched description of historical, religious, and contemporary literature, this thesis examines the historical origins of the ancient Kharijite narrative and the manner in which the historical precedence of the term and its associated imagery have been applied to recent history. Research indicates that the Kharijite label has been used as and remains a legitimizing instrument with the power to imbue its user with Islamic credentials and authority while marginalizing opposition movements. As exemplified in post-colonial Egypt, states use the Kharijite epithet during periods of state formation or weak government rule to solidify the state's monopoly of the use of violence within an Islamic context. Similarly, non-state actors use the charge to create political and religious legitimacy for their movement to the detriment of rival factions. This common utilization of the Kharijite epithet by both state and non-state actors demonstrates the political power of the Islamic lexicon and underscores the legitimacy crisis of nascent regimes and the potential risk for Western states that support regimes who employ the "Kharijite" epithet.

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ABSTRACT

Within the Islamic world, the religious past often plays a formative role in our understanding of contemporary issues. One such rhetorical idiom from the past, the label "Kharijite," has been, and is still, used as a pejorative by both state and non-state actors against myriad Islamist organizations and entities. Through an intensively researched description of historical, religious, and contemporary literature, this thesis examines the historical origins of the ancient Kharijite narrative and the manner in which the historical precedence of the term and its associated imagery have been applied to recent history. Research indicates that the Kharijite label has been used as and remains a legitimizing instrument with the power to imbue its user with Islamic credentials and authority while marginalizing opposition movements. As exemplified in post-colonial Egypt, states use the Kharijite epithet during periods of state formation or weak government rule to solidify the state's monopoly of the use of violence within an Islamic context. Similarly, non-state actors use the charge to create political and religious legitimacy for their movement to the detriment of rival factions. This common utilization of the Kharijite epithet by both state and non-state actors demonstrates the political power of the Islamic lexicon and underscores the legitimacy crisis of nascent regimes and the potential risk for Western states that support regimes who employ the "Kharijite" epithet.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The past, particularly the religious past, often plays a formative role in our understanding of contemporary issues. The continuous reinvention of idioms, tradition, ritual, and institutions provide a heuristic frame in which modern-day events are understood. These well-sculpted and potent orthodoxies set the boundaries and rules in which actors—the state and non-state, religious and political—interact. They are part of the cultural toolkit that allows agents of history to selectively retrieve cultural symbols and religious tropes that are often manipulated to fit the mold of contemporary events. Moreover, the utilization of well-worn epithets and narratives not only mirrors the present environment but rather the identities and actions of those actors living within it. It is within this phenomenon that a society's historical memory intersects with the context of the present; a blended reality emerges from such a crossroads, part religious orthodoxy, part historical narrative, part extant events. The construction of such a hybrid reality represents an attempt to shape the present by harnessing a fluid and selectively curated reality from the past.

Within the Islamic cultural idiom, the labeling of someone or something "Kharijite"—the name of an early Islamic faction with a reputation for extreme violence and religious intransigence—is often wielded as a potent rhetorical weapon. State and non-state actors brandish the Kharijite label and its associated narrative as a pejorative that imbues their existence and legitimacy with a religiously and polemically laden narrative well understood by the Islamic community. In the twentieth century, groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Takfir wal-Hijra, and the Islamic Group garnered the title of "neo-Kharijites," conjuring violent, fringe, and unequivocally religious imagery that is understood, in this recurrence, as an existential challenge to the modern state and fabric of Islamic society. In the twentieth century, the Islamic State and its affiliates have been the recipients of similar aspersions for their rebellious, destabilizing, and extremist behaviors; however, non-state actors such as Madkhali adherent Salafists in Libya, prominent Islamists within the Muslim Brotherhood, and leaders of the Islamic State have labeled rivals and internal dissidents as Kharijites in defense of their own legitimacy, exposing the

political dimension of the term's use and the non-state actor's agenda. The use of the term by seemingly antithetical entities makes its invocation even more peculiar and interesting. Not only is the Kharijite epithet used by state-actors from Morocco to Afghanistan, but simultaneously used by extremist groups who employ the moniker when branding other extremist groups as heretics.[1] The use of the Kharijite curse by disparate actors indicates that each shares components of a collective, Islamic identity that not only represents a religious intent but a spectrum of diverse impulses.

The use of the term Kharijite not only reveals the religious identity and intent of those using its power—state actors like Egypt and non-state actors like the Islamic State—but uncovers the political character of those who employ such epithets. Hence, both state actors and non-state actors have masked their political motivations of the Kharijite aspersion behind a religious, ideological façade. Understanding how actors use this term allows for three key insights: the degree to which Middle Eastern states co-opt religious institutions and narratives to neutralize challenges from domestic and external threats; the degree to which the Islamist groups resolve challenges to their authority and constitution from internal and external threats; and the potential utility of the term's employment in combating Islamist extremism.

Furthermore, religious institutions associated with the states of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco have issued multiple religious decrees, labeling both violent and non-violent domestic groups and transnational extremist organizations as Kharijites to demonize such groups and marginalize their power.[2] While these religious decrees did not emanate from the state, the religious institution's proximity to regime power indicates a co-opting of spiritual authority to advance the efforts of the state. It should be noted that states use multiple terms to demonize their rivals, including *takfiris*, terrorists, and *mufsideen bil ard* (corruptors on Earth.) This use of "official Islam" as an extension of

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[1] Mohammed M. Hafez, "Not My Brother's Keeper: Factional Infighting in Armed Islamist Movements," *Journal of Religion and Violence* 7, no. 2 (2019): 189–208, https://doi.org/10.5840/jrv2019112265.

[2] Hussam S. Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites* (New York: Peter Lang Inc., International Academic Publishers, 2007); Jeffrey T. Kenney, *Muslim Rebels: Kharijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt*, 1 edition (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

regime power elevates the state, placing it in a position of religiously ordained authority over any domestic or external challenge.

This thesis seeks to understand why and when state and non-state actors utilize the term Kharijite when branding rebel, Islamist, or extremist groups. Moreover, it will investigate the historical, religious, and political implications associated with the term Kharijite. By understanding the Kharijite narrative's ancient origins and factors surrounding its modern use, we can comprehend the phenomenon's modern incantation and the intersection of religion, centralized power, and political dissension. More broadly, this thesis seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the idiom's strategic significance in the communication of religious values, identity, and political motivations.

A.   DEFINITIONS AND FRAMING

This thesis discusses the phenomenon of the Kharijites and the use of the term as a weapon or brand—specific to the context of Islamic society's religious and cultural lexicon. From this need for specificity, it is important to define some of the terms used within this thesis. Culture is defined as "the shared system of meanings that we use to structure social life and guide our social interactions."[3] Culture and cultural identity are not static but exist in a consistently evolving state based on repeated social interactions and changing structural forces. A cultural idiom is a set of words or phrases that denote a specific concept or phenomenon within a given cultural group. Thus, the term Kharijite and the associated narrative belong to an Islamic cultural idiom, in which the term and its associated meaning and imagery are understood. As Serif Mardin notes:

> Every author who has written about Islam has indicated that Islam is more than simply a religious belief, that it structures the social life of Islamic societies, that it provides the foundations for political obligation and that, in short, it penetrates the smallest interstices of daily life and of social and political organization. What these authors have not elucidated is the process by which such a society is reproduced. What I suggest is that the

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[3] Brian A. Monahan, The Shock of the News: Media Coverage and the Making of 9/11 (New York: NYU Press, 2010), 31.

reproduction of Islamic societies is linked to a common use of an Islamic idiom by the members of such societies.[4]

In this way, the Kharijite aspersion is a prime example of such an Islamic idiom; the epithet is cast in a pejorative manner, framing the cultural identity of the Kharijites as an Islamic folk devil. This devilish invocation evokes specific radical and dangerous imagery understood by most within Islamic society. The term is leveraged to define a person or group in absolute, unambiguous terms, with little intellectual room to refute or debate the accuracy of such a title.

This thesis defines a state as "a human community that [successfully] claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."[5] Throughout each chapter, references to Max Weber, the Weberian State, or Weber's axiom regarding statehood refer to this definition.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

An examination of the historical Kharijites, modern Kharijites, and the use of the term Kharijite by state and non-state actors encompasses a review of five sets of literature: heresiographical and historical scholarship from the medieval Islamic period; modern Arab historiography; Kharijite apologetic scholarship; Islamic *turath* scholarship; and modern Western scholarship. To thoroughly answer the research questions, it is essential to have a deep understanding of the original Kharijites as seen through various lenses. This literature helps answer the primary research questions addressed in this thesis by providing numerous interpretations and conclusions regarding Western and non-Western perspectives of the original Kharijites, neo-Kharijites, and its use as a rhetorical term.

For all literature written in Arabic, translations and cataloging were obtained through the dissertation and subsequent publications of Hussam Timani and other authors.

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[4] Serif Mardin, Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 3.

[5] Max Weber, Hans Heinrich Gerth, and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York; Oxon, Routledge Press, 2009), 78.

1.   Medieval Islamic Scholarship

The dominant view of the Kharijites emphasizes their extremist views of religion and piety, and above all, their violent tendencies and religious zealotry; these tones stem from narratives developed by proto-Sunni Muslim scholars in the generations following the first civil war.[6] While historical evidence indicates that the Kharijites are indeed responsible for the discord and death attributed to their cause, Umayyad and Abbasid scholars authored polemics that minimized the political, social, and economic diversity of the Kharijite movement. Therefore, understanding the motivation and characterization of the Kharijites at the hands of the orthodox medieval *ulema* (Islamic scholars) provides the basis for the modern presentation of Kharijism in Western and non-Western circles alike.

Several accounts of medieval Islamic literature focused on the historical, political, and theological progression of the Kharijites.[7] Historians such as al-Tabari and Ibn Khayyat weave the emerging Sunni narrative into the historical instance of the Kharijites in a manner that promoted the centrality of Caliphal power and government order.[8] The heresiographical writings—those concerned with sectarian branching of Islamic and non-Islamic faiths—of al-Shahrastani, however, provide the most comprehensive review.[9] Al-Shahrastani's extensive discussion of the Kharijites, his *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal* (*al-Milal*), is the most cited and well-developed account of the Kharijites. Key to our understanding of orthodox thought concerning the Kharijites, *al-Milal* encapsulates scholastic thought concerning the Kharijites from the seventh to eleventh centuries.

A common refrain in al-Shahrastani's writings on the Kharijites signals that he was overly concerned with the effects of dissention upon society.[10] This can be seen in his

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[6] Patricia Crone, God's Rule—Government and Islam: Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), chap. 5.

[7] Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari, Volume 17: The First Civil War: From the Battle of Siffin to the Death of 'ali A.D. 656–661/A.H.* 36–40, trans. G. R. Hawting. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996; Robert G. Hoyland, ed., *Khalifa Ibn Khayyat's History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, trans. Carl Wurtzel, 1st ed. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015; al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, trans. A. K. Kazi, 1st ed. New York; Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2013.

[8] Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*.

[9] al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*.

[10] al-Shahrastani, chap. 1.

definition of the Kharijites: "[W]hoever rebelled against the legitimate imam accepted by the people is called a [Kharijite] whether this rebellion took place at the time of the Companions [of the Prophet] against the rightfully guided imams, or their worthy successors, or against the imams of any time."[11] This definition places the Kharijites in a category of rebels who fight against any form of centralized government. Al-Shahrastani transforms the definition of the Kharijites from the specific designation of the seventh-century group to any group that threatens a rightful (or appointed) leader. By defining the Kharijites in such terms, al-Shahrastani introduces the group as a religious symbol that "[A]nathematize [s] religious rebellion and upholds the status quo."[12] Al-Milal is not an instance-based polemic against the Kharijites akin to the works of earlier scholars; it entrenches and expands the Islamic understanding of the Kharijites as the persistent attempts of evil to incite dissent and discord among the righteous people of God.[13] By doing so, al-Shahrastani attaches a universal and transcendent attribute of the "harmful effects of human dissension" to the group and the idiom of the Kharijites.[14]

By invoking Mohammed's warnings about the Kharijites and including the innovations of the Kharijites, al-Shahrastani synthesizes critical hadith with heresy. Not only did al-Shahrastani translate the concept of Kharijism into a universal and timeless movement, but he also sought to ground the original instance of Kharijism in the traditional Islamic texts.[15] According to *Al-Milal*, the Prophet foretold of the coming of the Kharijites: "From the stock of this man there will emerge a people who will fly from religion as an arrow flies from a bow."[16] As stated in the Sunnah, Mohammad predicted the arrival of the Kharijites and their rebellious violence and heresy. Al-Shahrastani builds on Mohammad's insights by enumerating the *bida'*—religious innovations that depart from

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[11] al-Shahrastani, 85.

[12] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels,* 15.

[13] al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*.

[14] Jeffrey T. Kenney, *The Emergence of the Khawarij: Religion and the Social Order in Early Islam* (University of California, Santa Barbara, 1990), 3.

[15] Jeffrey T. Kenney, *Heterodoxy and Culture: The Legacy of the Khawarij in Islamic History* (University of Michigan Dissertation Information Service,1991); al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*.

[16] al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 100.

the proper practice of Islam—and proclaiming that the Khawarij were guilty of "the innovation of the imamate and the innovation of finding fault with Ali for his [arbitration] at Siffin."[17] This potent formula attaches a significant and negative religious association to not only the Kharijites but those deemed Kharijite like rebels.

Correspondingly, Al-Shahrastani used his classification of the Kharijites as immortal rebels to defend the Caliphate, marking the Kharijites as a recurrent manifestation of evil and heretical, devious belief. He promotes Ali's response to the Kharijite's anti-establishment themes: "[The Kharijites] say there is no need for government, yet there must be a government, either good or bad."[18] This elevates the idea that maintenance of the government, even in instances of derelict, corrupt, and immoral leadership, is supreme to challenges against it. Shahrastani's statement thus enshrines the power and legitimation of the caliph (and future leadership) against any challenges to its authority.

Al-Shahrastani's definition and subsequent qualification of the Kharijites presented a liturgical yet politically vested rebuke of the group. *Al-Milal* serves as the consolidated Umayyad and Abbasid polemicist: it portrays the Kharijites as a challenge to the orthodox religious order, a threat to the Caliphate, and a danger to the Islamic community.

2.   Modern Arab Literature

Modern Middle Eastern literature concerning the rise and propagation of Kharijite ideology focuses on the religious, political, and social motivations of the group and its struggle against centralized power in a more sympathetic manner. It must be noted that this literature emerged during a unique context in the modern Middle East, where the competing ideologies of Islamist and state-supported secular movements loom large in historical accounts of the Kharijites.[19] Much of the literature of this period reflected contemporary interpretations of the struggle of secular-minded state authority and the place

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[17] al-Shahrastani, 83.

[18] al-Shahrastani, 101.

[19] Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 92.

of the Islamist movement within society. Thus, scholars offer their interpretations of the Kharijites to justify their views of the greater tensions in the Middle East.[20]

Modern Arab scholars highlight the extreme religio-political position of the Kharijites concerning the power and authority of the four rightly guided Caliphs, the Umayyads, and the Abbasids. In his 1953 *Tarikh al-Islam*, Hasan Ibrahim Hasan argues that the Kharijites were no more than a political party that became increasingly disenchanted with the perceived corruption of the ruling elite.[21] In *Al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm,* 'Ali' Abd al-Raziq argues that the Kharijites posed a significant threat to the unified Islamic community and the political structure of the Caliphate.[22] Al-Raziq contests the notion that Arabs fought the Kharijites because they deviated from mainstream Islam, but rather waged wars "aimed at oppressing the group politically rather than defending Islam against 'unbelievers.'"[23] Echoing the sentiments of al-Raziq, Faruq' Umar Fawzi in *Nash'at al-Harakat al-Diniyya al-Siyasiyya fi al-Islam* attributes the tension between the Caliphate and the Kharijites as one of central authority versus a rogue element that eschews centralized, dynastic rule in favor of a more individualistic and democratic order.[24] Evident in this set of literature is the focus on the Kharijites' political nature and their struggle against the centralized authority of the Caliphate. The re-emergence of Kharijite literature during the second half of the twentieth century was intended to overlay the current struggles of Islamists vis-à-vis the state.[25] Therefore, the condition of the Kharijites, and thus the neo-Kharijites, is not one of pure religious struggle, but of political struggle.

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[20] Timani, 92.

[21] Hasan Ibrahim Hasan, Tarikh al-Islam: al-siyasi wa-al-dini wa-al-thaqafi wa-al-ijtima`i (Sharjah: al-Dar al-Andalus, 1964); cited in Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 24–25.

[22] 'Ali 'Abd Al-Raziq, *Al-Islam Wa Usul Al-Hukm: A Modern, Liberal Development of Muslim Thought*, trans. Souad Tagelsir Ali Salt Lake City: Department of Languages and Literature, University of Utah Press, 2004; cited in Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 35.

[23] 'Ali 'Abd Al-Raziq, 'Ali 'Abd Al-Raziq's Al-Islam Wa Usul Al-Hukm, 194.

[24] Faruq' Umar Fawzi, *Nashat Al-Harakat al-Diniyah al-Siyasiyah Fi al-Islam*, 1st ed. (Amman, Jordan: al-Ahlīyah lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī, 1999); cited in Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 37.

[25] Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 94–95.

3. Kharijite Apologetic Literature

Much of the modern Islamic intellectual literature concerning the Kharijites comes from Ibadi scholars seeking to provide a more positive image of the Kharijites to separate the Ibadiyya from neo-Kharijism. This literature attempts to fully articulate the beliefs of the Ibadiyya, drawing distinctions between the Ibadiyya and the violent and extremist practices of the Kharijites. This literature, in conjunction with the *Turath* literature, has tried to counter the relatively negative image of the Kharijites with a more nuanced and polished view of the group.

Sulayman ibn Dawud ibn Yusuf, in *Al-Khawarij hum Ansar al-Imam 'Ali,* attempts to reconcile the Kharijite movement (and, in turn, the Ibadiyya) with that of mainstream Islam. Ibn Yusuf contends that the Kharijites were some of Caliph' Ali's most loyal followers and notes that heresiographers, like al-Shahrastani, intentionally distorted the image of the Kharijites.[26] Shahrastani, in Ibn Yusuf's view, was writing with centralized authority in mind and failed to provide evidence (*isnad*) for his assertions.[27] Ibn Yusuf is not alone in assessing the treatment of Kharijites in the Islamic heritage as distorted by medieval Islamic scholars seeking to legitimate the powers of the state; this view is prevalent among Ibadi scholars and Western ideologues from around the Muslim world.

4. Kharijites in the *Turath*

According to Fazlur Rahman, "something of [the Kharijite's] radical spirit…has been relived…in several relatively recent movements."[28] Four notable scholars of Islamic heritage interpret the Kharijites in the light of the scholars' ideological predisposition—Nationalist, Marxist, Feminist, and Islamist—and present modern takes on the Kharijites that further contorts the group's original understanding to fit contemporary agendas. Ahmad Amin emphasizes the Arab Nationalist tone of the Kharijites, noting that

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[26] Sulayman b. Dawud b. Yusuf, *Al-Khawarij Hum Ansar al-Imam*, 1st ed. (Qissnatina, Algeria: Dar al-Ba'th, 1983), 16; Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 79.

[27] Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*.

[28] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 170; Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 77.

nationalism is not only a contemporary strain but rather a classical motif of Kharijite political doctrine that aimed to preserve the distinctly Arab identity of Islam.[29] Hussein Mruwah and later R. E. Brunnow demonstrate the egalitarian and socialist-type behaviors of the Kharijites rooted in class conflict between the primarily tribal, nomadic Arabs, and the landed Arab elites that settled newly conquered lands in Syria and Iraq.[30] The wealth obtained by the Umayyad, Quraysh, and other families at the expense of the proto-Kharijites marginalized the group to an economic and political rebellion. Leila Ahmed places the egalitarian nature of the Kharijites next to her theories of Islamic feminism and argues that the practices and regulations placed on women by Muhammed were temporary and did not constrain the Kharijites.[31] In allowing women to author poetry, fight, and have a say in the choice of leadership, Kharijite social thought was far more liberal than earlier depictions of the group. However, most importantly, the Islamist views of Mahmud Isma'il present the rise of the modern Islamist movement in terms of a Kharijite renaissance of religious purity and fundamentalism.[32] While Isma'il intends to repaint the Kharijites in a positive, purist light that attempts to uplift modern Islamists, his work does little to challenge the widely held orthodox opinions of the Kharijites.

5.   Western Scholarship

Western scholarship regarding the Kharijites ranges from the Orientalist writings of R. E. Brunnow and Julius Wellhausen in the latter part of the nineteenth century to the socio-political analysis of the Kharijites presented by Jeffrey Kenney.[33] Early writings of the Kharijites in the West tend to focus on their religious and Bedouin-Arab origins, focusing on a purist and historical approach grounded in heresiographical Sunni polemics.

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[29] Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 93–94.

[30] Rudolf-Ernst Brünnow, "Die Charidschiten unter den ersten Omayyaden. Ein beitrag zur geschichte des ersten islamischen jahrhunderts ..." (Lieden: Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1884); Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 49–50. Both scholars are referenced in Timani. Mruwah's original work is in Arabic and Brunnow's original work is in German.

[31] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, Reissue edition. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1993.

[32] Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 94–95.

[33] Julius Wellhausen, *Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Pub. Co., 1975); Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 49–55; Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*.

However, modern Western literature focuses on the political nature of the Kharijites and their struggles against the emerging political structure of the era. At its culmination lays Jeffrey Kenney's *Muslim Rebels: Kharijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt*, Hussam Timani's *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, and Hanna Lenna Hagemann's "History and Memory: Khārijism in Early Islamic Historiography."[34]

In *Muslim Rebels*, Kenney analyzes the historical and political nature of the Kharijite epithet in Modern Egypt concerning the Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots Takfir wal-Hijra and the Islamic Group.[35] In essence, Kenney makes a case that state forces, in conjunction with the arbiters of "official Islam" at al-Azhar, revived "discursive references to the Kharijites…as a way to denounce" the rise of Islamist organizations that threatened the state's authority.[36] The touchstone of Kenney's work points out the power of al-Azhar and the state to brand Islamist groups—whether violent or not—as a "demonic force rooted in the original activities of Satan and his ongoing efforts to bring about the downfall of humankind."[37] Therefore, modern Islamist groups are neo-Kharijites; tying the Brotherhood to the consistent embodiment of evil rather than the ephemeral religio-political movement of the original group. Kenney then traces the evolution of Kharijite imagery and conception throughout the twentieth century from the era of Nasser to the present day.

Timani, building on the heresiographical writings of medieval Islamic scholars, modern Middle Eastern, Kharijite apologists, and Modern Western scholarship, analyzes the rise of the group Takfir wal-Hijra and other Islamic extremist groups.[38] He argues that "Islamic extremism is not a twentieth-century phenomenon…[but] first appeared with the Kharijites in the seventh century," noting that certain "behaviors and terminologies of

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[34] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*; Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*; Hannah-Lena Hagemann, "History and Memory: Khārijism in Early Islamic Historiography," July 2, 2015, https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/11692.

[35] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*.

[36] Kenney, 24.

[37] Kenney, 21.

[38] Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*.

contemporary extremist groups…can be traced to the Kharijite movement."[39] He contends that because of the Islamic extremist group's behavioral overlap with the Kharijites concerning *takfir* (ex-communication), *hijra* (emigration), and *hakimiyya* (the sovereignty of God), the construing of ancient religious narratives with modern Islamist groups exhibiting similar behaviors is an easy comparison to make.[40] Timani concludes that the rise of modern Islamic fundamentalism has resulted in "modern scholarship [giving] more attention to the study of Kharijites," thus uncovering a broader and less Sunni orthodox understanding of the group.[41] While the image of the Kharijites is not universally positive among Muslims and scholars, the group "serve [s] as a symbol…for many…as ideal Muslims," egalitarians, bearers of democracy, and "tolerant in their treatment of women."[42] Conversely, Timani states that the Sunni orthodoxy of "official Islam" has perpetuated a negative image of the Kharijites, thus conflating the rise of a contemporary, fundamentalist movement—whose emergence is fourteen centuries removed from that of the Kharijites—and that of the original dissenters.

Hanna Lenna Hagemann, in her PhD dissertation, argues that the collection of early historiographic writings concerning the Kharijites lack a narrative substance, indicating that the "historiographical sources approach Kharijism not as an end in itself, but as a narrative tool with which to illustrate, discuss, and criticize other actors and subject matters."[43] Hagemann takes a minimalist, if not pessimistic, view of the historiographers of Islamic antiquity. She notes that while the narratives are not likely a complete fabrications of the early Islamic years, "There is no getting past the acknowledgment that whatever historical 'truth' has survived in the sources is woven into … the complex construct of literary and rhetorical elements many of whose subtleties and double entendre had already been lost to the passage of time when the reports finally found their way into

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[39] Timani, 104.

[40] Timani, chap. 4.

[41] Timani, 105.

[42] Timani, 116.

[43] Hagemann, "History and Memory," 3.

the works of al-Baladhuri and his fellow historiographers."[44] Thus, accepting the historical narratives of the early heresiographers must be viewed in the light of the underlying compulsions and competing interests of their time. Hageman argues that the true identity and complaints of the Kharijites cannot be elucidated from the works of the historiographers; rather, historiographers were inclined to promote a particular topos as opposed to documenting events as they occurred.[45]

The existing literature regarding the Kharijites has evolved from the early centuries of Islam to the emergence of Islamic extremist groups, as "they represent a resurgence of the past in the present."[46] While the literature presented here spans almost a millennium, it represents the thread that connects the original Kharijite movement to the modern Islamic extremists as "Kharijites." The understanding of these conflicting modern narratives by a host of actors—states, non-state actors, and external state actors such as the United States— lend themselves to natural tension between what clerical authority holds as the official image of the Kharijites and alternate perceptions of their identity. Therefore, the arc of their existence in scholarship and liturgical literature provides ample evidence and a starting point in answering the primary research questions of this thesis.

C.   RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis will explore the historiographical and heresiographical underpinnings of the Kharijite master narrative: Egypt from 1952 to the present; the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and al-Nusra from 2010 to the present; and a thick description of the use of the Kharijite narrative in all periods. Research presented thus far reveals that the use of the curse Kharijite occurs under conditions when a state is in its formative years or most vulnerable to both domestic and foreign threats. Under these conditions, states deem domestic and external Islamist and Islamic extremists pejoratively as Kharijites based on the themes of medieval scholarship, mainly that of al-Shahrastani, to link any group deemed a threat to the essentialist and deleterious Kharijites of antiquity. By providing a

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[44] Hagemann, 192.

[45] Hagemann, 52.

[46] Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 5.

fulsome description of the historical Kharijites, the popular perceptions of the Kharijites, and the political and religious disposition of the regimes that employ the term, policymakers, military operators, and U.S. interlocutors gain a richer understanding of the political and religious motivations behind the term's use and the modern relationship between state power and the curse.

Before proceeding to two case studies, this thesis will conduct a thorough examination of the Islamic heresiography and historiography concerning the Kharijites, as well as contemporary literature on the same subject. The establishment of a common historical narrative in the second chapter will form the foundation from which the contemporary interrogation of the use of the Kharijite narrative in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is based.

The primary method for analyzing why and when state and non-state actors use the term Kharijite in modern times centers on the historical examination of two case studies. The first case study will concern the use of the term Kharijite by the Egyptian government against the domestic group Muslim Brotherhood and Takfir wal-Hijra. The second case study will evaluate the use of the term Kharijite Islamists—members of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and al-Nusra. By underscoring the perceptions of the Kharijites in theoretical, historical, and ideological literature combined with the historical background into each of the cases, a deeper understanding of the term's use, desired effect by the user, the actual outcome of its use, and the term's effectiveness can be assessed. In each case study, an assessment of the origin, medium of conveyance, the target of the term, and the intended audience will occur. Subsequently, conclusions can then be drawn regarding the reasons for the use of the term, the result of its use, and an assessment of its future efficacy.

Concerning this thesis topic, little statistical data—polling, records, census results—is available. An evaluation of qualitative data—interviews, periodicals, reports, and existing literature—yielded the most robust assessment of the phenomenon. In the Egyptian case study, existing scholarship, religious archives, and available media archives were used. In the case of the Islamic State, social media and group-generated official media

(ex. Dabiq magazine in the case of the Islamic State) served as the primary resources interspersed with periodicals and existing scholarship.

D.   THESIS OVERVIEW

This examination of the use of the term Kharijite by state and non-state actors will be divided into five chapters. Chapter I covers an introduction to the topic, as well as a literature review and thesis design. Chapter II will introduce the narrative of the Kharijites penned by medieval Islamic heresiographers and historiographers, providing the basis for the use of the term as a curse in the case studies reviewed. Chapter III will address the use of the term Kharijite by state forces—Egypt—and Chapter IV the use of the term by non-state actors—the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic State, and al-Qaeda. Chapter V consists of concluding remarks, the findings of the case studies, implications for policy, and policy recommendations.

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II.   THE MASTER KHARIJITE NARRATIVE[47]

The contemporary narrative of the Kharijites in both Western and non-Western literature is inextricably influenced by the historiographers and heresiographers of the medieval Islamic period, roughly the ninth to thirteenth centuries. The histories produced by al-Tabari and Ibn Khayyat and the chronicles of heresy by al-Shahrastani paint a common image of the Kharijites as a violent, intransigent, and extremist group whose doctrine and behavior were formulated solely on the basis of religion. Moreover, it has been argued by many Western academics that Islamic scholars of the medieval age were not passive recorders of history and religion, but rather were motivated by ulterior political compulsions that sought to legitimize the power of Islamic orthodoxy in the hands of the newly formed Abbasid Caliphate and the rising institution of the *ulema*.[48] The drive to consolidate and legitimize the rule of the newly established government and its religious arbiters, coupled with the purportedly heretical and heterodox tendencies of the Kharijites made the group an ideal target for the polemicist's pen. By drawing on the events of the first centuries of Islam and Islamic scriptures (the Quran and Hadith), the *ulema* developed a malignant narrative of the Kharijites that fit the political, religious, and social needs of the ruling elite and cast the group as intrinsically poisonous to the wellbeing of the Muslim community. Thus, the identity of the Kharijites is both externally generated and based, in some part, on the subjective observations of the *ulema*. An understanding of the polemical narrative created and promulgated by the medieval Islamic heresiographers and historiographers provides the language by which the Kharijites are understood in the popular Islamic cultural dialect and is critical in explaining the emergence of the term's utilization as a brand or curse in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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[47] The phrase and overall composition of the master Kharijite narrative was fully elucidated by Rodney L. Thomson in his postgraduate thesis at California State University, Chico—"The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam." This thesis draws on themes and the history of Thomson's second chapter.

[48] Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*; Hagemann, "History and Memory"; Kenney, *Heterodoxy and Culture*.

The standard narrative of the Kharijites—in this study referred to as the master narrative[49]—is an amalgamation of oral and written sources compiled by early Islamic historiographers and heresiographers. To fully understand its importance, two main points must be noted about the early Islamic heresiographical and historiographical traditions before proceeding. First, Islamic historiographers of late antiquity attempted to document events as they occurred but did so within the emerging orthodoxy of the time and in a pattern of consistent polemical topoi.[50] While this trait is common among most historians, an understanding of the political and religious context in which the scholars compiled Islamic history indicates their political impetus and orthodox tendencies. Secondly, the lack of reliable Kharijite primary sources—Kharijite poetry, coinage, and surviving religious texts—leaves the interpretation of Kharijite identity to Islamic and Western scholars with little substantial knowledge of the group.[51] Thus, Kharijite identity, belief, and history are exogenous construction of medieval Islamic scholars who had little understanding of Kharijite self-identity or self-perceptions.

This narrative of the Kharijites was distilled by using Islamic heresiographic and historiographic writing in conjunction with Western scholarship. Before proceeding with the narrative, it is crucial to note that the Kharijites were not a monolith; in doctrine, action, and fervor, no Kharijite sect was the same as the other. Many Kharijites, such as the Ibadiyya and Suffriyya, established, maintained, and expanded states in Arabia, Persia, and North Africa.[52] However, the polemical narratives used in this chapter and the popular understanding of the Kharijites within Islam simplify the various sects and divisions of the

[49] Rodney L. Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam" (Master's thesis, Chico, CA: California State University, 2017), chap. 2.

[50] Hagemann, "History and Memory"; Rodney L. Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 12.

[51] For references on Kharijite primary sources, see A. Flayyeh and A. Al-Salehi, "Al-Shurat Picture in the Kharijite Poetry" 35 (January 1, 2008): 569–78; Adam R. Gaiser, "What Do We Learn About the Early Khārijites and Ibāḍiyya from Their Coins?," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130, no. 2 (2010): 167–87.

[52] Paul M. Love Jr, "The Sufris of Sijilmasa: Toward a History of the Midrarids," *The Journal of North African Studies* 15, no. 2 (June 1, 2010): 173–88, https://doi.org/10.1080/13629380902734136; Elizabeth Savage, *A Gateway to Hell, a Gateway to Paradise: The North African Response to the Arab Conquest*, First Edition (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Pr, 1997); Ballandalus, "Kharijism in Islamic North Africa (700-900): A Summary Overview," *Ballandalus* (blog), August 12, 2014, https://ballandalus.wordpress.com/2014/08/12/kharijism-in-islamic-north-africa-700-900-a-summary-overview/.

Kharijites into a homogenous group of actors. What all of the Kharijites did share was an intense dissatisfaction with the Caliphate and its emerging monarchical tendencies. This belief, seemingly common to all Kharijites, posed a clear danger to the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates and their religious interlocutors, the *ulema*.

A.   MOHAMMAD AND THE FIRST KHARIJITE

In the year 630,[53] the Prophet Muhammed—after securing Mecca in the Battle of Hunayn—moved to unite the tribes of the Hijaz and Najd.[54] As a result of that battle and the defeat of the tribes of Hawazin and Thaqif, the wealth of the Islamic community was overflowing.[55] According to Islamic custom, the Prophet Muhammed divided the booty among his companions and warriors. However, some of Muhammed's allies felt that their portion of the spoils of battle was inadequate and protested to Muhammed. One individual, Dhu al-Khuwaysirah of the Banu Tamim, denounced Muhammad as unjust in front of a handful of followers.[56] Rather than mollify al-Khuwaysirah, Muhammed foretold that the disgruntled companion would one day lead a religion (understood as sect) that would prove ephemeral and leave little impact on the world:

> Let him alone, for he will have a following that will go so deeply into religion that they will come out of it as an arrow comes out of the target; you look at the head and there is nothing on it; you look at the butt end and there is nothing on it; then at the notch and there is nothing on it. It went through before flesh and blood could adhere to it.[57]

As is the case with all the Prophet's sayings, this prophecy would come to pass when al-Khuwaysirah—also known by the name Hurqus ibn Zuhayr—would become the first Kharijite.[58] Additionally, as detailed by al-Shahrastani, the Prophet was said to have

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[53] All dates are in C.E.

[54] Maʿmar ibn Rāshid and M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *The Expeditions: An Early Biography of Muḥammad*, trans. Sean W. Anthony, Bilingual edition (New York; London: NYU Press, 2014), 104–9.

[55] Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari*, *Volume 9: The Last Years of the Prophet*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press 2019, 26–38.

[56] Al-Tabari, 26–38.

[57] I. Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. A. Guillaume, Reprint edition (Karachi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 595–96.

[58] al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 99–100.

characterized the group as an extant fixture of society only to be remedied near the day of judgment.[59]

B.   THE BATTLE OF SIFFIN: THE SECESSION OF THE QURRA'

Though the episode of al-Khuwaysirah demonstrates Muhammed's prescience in divining the first sectarians of Islam, the sect emerged in a recognizable form under the rule of the third Caliph, Uthman ibn 'Affan, from a group initially termed the Qurra'.[60] The Qurra' were considered pious men and earned their name from their practice of reciting the Qur'an from memory.[61] The origins of the group are disputed; some argue their foundation is based on displeasure with caliphal authority as a consequence of the unequal division of war spoils, while other scholars like R. E. Brunnow contend the group was preoccupied with pre-Islamic tribal tradition and the ascendancy of the Banu Hashim over all other tribes.[62] Upon the ascension of 'Ali, the cousin and brother-in-law to the Prophet, to the position of commander of the faithful and fourth Caliph, a power struggle ensued between the newly minted Caliph and the powerful governor of Syria from the Banu Umayya, Mu'awiya ibn 'Abi Sufyan. 'Ali did not move against the murderers of former caliph Uthman, Mu'awiya's cousin; thus, Mu'awiya refused to recognize 'Ali as Caliph. The ensuing power struggle—known as the first civil war or fitna—culminated in the Battle of Siffin in 657. After several days of fierce and pitched fighting, the tide of the battle had swung decidedly in 'Ali's favor. However, not to be undone by the might of 'Ali, Mu'awiya's counselors, 'Amr ibn al-'As, advised Mu'awiya of a ploy to prolong the loss of the battle.[63] At the end of their pikes, the soldiers of Mu'awiya raised the masahif—all or parts of the Quran—in an attempt to push 'Ali to accept an arbitration based on the Quran. 'Ali, fearing duplicity in Mu'awiya's stunt and against his better judgment, conceded to arbitration at the behest of the Qurra'. The Qurra' implored 'Ali, "[R]espond

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[59] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels,* 31.

[60] Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari Vol. 17*.

[61] G. H. A. Juynboll, "The Qurrā' in Early Islamic History," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 16, no. 2/3 (1973): 113, https://doi.org/10.2307/3596211.

[62] Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 49–50.

[63] Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari Vol. 17*, 80–84.

to the Book of God when you are called to it…Otherwise we shall indeed deliver you up entirely to the enemy or do what we [did] with [Uthman]."[64] Accepting arbitration proved disastrous for 'Ali. 'Ali's chosen arbitrator and that demanded by the Qurra', Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, was neither as cunning nor intellectual as 'Amr ibn al-'As, Mu'awiya's arbitrator.[65] Outwitted by the cunning al-As, both Mu'awiya and 'Ali agreed to abandon their claims to the Caliphate and left the decision of the new commander of the faithful to a council.[66]

'Ali, struck by the deception of Mu'awiya and al-As, was reluctant, however, to accept the results of the arbitration as he had effectively been on the brink of victory prior to arbitration. Experiencing a shift in opinion that disavowed their previous calls for arbitration, the Qurra' now called for the resumption of battle; arbitration had effectively subsumed God's will below that of man's.[67] This action, in due course, was a grave sin to the Qurra' who openly called for 'Ali to eschew arbitration, chanting "judgment belongs to God alone." 'Ali refused the demands of the Qurra', further deepening the tension within 'Ali's camp. The Qurra', now disenchanted with 'Ali, who placed the judgment of a man before God, seceded from 'Ali's camp and sought refuge in the village of Harura near Kufa.[68] There, the proto-Kharijites elected 'Abdallah ibn Wahb al-Rasibi as their faction's leader, one who was capable of "commanding the good and the prohibiting of what is reprehensible."[69] The group of seceders, sometimes called the Harura for the place in which they gathered, were joined by other like-minded Muslims from Kufa and Basrah.

Displeased with the arbitration and plagued by bands of Kharijites murdering others for their beliefs, 'Ali set out to raise an army in what is now Kufa and Basrah.[70] After

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[64] Al-Tabari, 80. This reference to Uthman, or Ibn Affan, indicates that sources place the responsibility for Uthman's death squarely with the proto-Kharijites.

[65] Al-Tabari, 100–104.

[66] Al-Tabari, 104–10.

[67] Hawting, 100–104, 110–41.

[68] Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari Vol. 17*, 98–99.

[69] Al-Tabari, 99.

[70] Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 258–59.

cobbling together a force, 'Ali was determined to attack the seceders first, followed by Mu'awiya and his Syrian brethren. The seceders, now encamped at al-Nahrawan, met 'Ali on the field of battle in 658.[71] The result was a decisive victory for 'Ali, who left only ten surviving Kharijites; among the dead was the first Kharijite proclaimed by the Prophet: Dhu al-Khuwaysirah. Those Kharijites surviving the battle escaped to Khorasan, the Najd, Oman, and North Africa, and would win converts in their new homes.[72] While the battle of Nahrawan did not mark the end of the Kharijites, it marked the last instance of doctrinal unity among the sects.

To this point in the master narrative, the actions of the Kharijites, and solely those of the Kharijites, in the wake of the battle of Siffin and Nahrawan, predominate. The Kharijites are depicted as seemingly quixotic and somewhat mercurial, demanding of 'Ali contradictory action concerning the arbitration at Siffin. The zealotry of their demands, their abandonment of 'Ali, and the subsequent violence of the Kharijites unleashed on 'Ali and his followers portend an emerging and mostly negative Kharijite identity. The religious motivations attributed to their secession minimize the earlier economic and social complaints during the time of the Prophet and that of Uthman. Similarly, the violence characteristically ascribed to the Kharijites during this period was perpetrated by all parties involved in the first fitna. Why did the negative attributes factor so heavily into Kharijite identity when both sides cited religious impetus for their actions and committed violent acts to nearly similar degrees?

C.   KHARIJITES ON THE BRINK: KHARIJISM IN THE PERIOD AFTER THE FIRST FITNA

By 665, Kharijite uprisings had accelerated in Basrah after Ziyad ibn 'Abi Sufyan took over as governor of the city.[73] The newly appointed governor, having a strong distaste for the Kharijite dissidents, swiftly moved against the Kharijites of Basrah. By 670, Ziyad, assisted by his deputy Samurah ibn Jundab, squashed the Kharijites of Basrah and began

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71 Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari Vol. 17*, 111–41.

72 Al-Tabari, 104–10.

73 Rodney L. Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 17.

persecuting Kharijite-affiliated persons and groups. Ziyad, threatening to withhold the stipend of the Basrahans, attempted to turn the citizens of the city against quietist and activist Kharijites alike.[74] However, by 672, Kharijite sympathizers and the governor's iron fist gave the Kharijites the space to act against the governor. Qurayb ibn Murrah, along with Zahaf ibn Rahar and a group of persecuted Kharijites "put to the sword everyone they met on their way without distinction."[75] Again, as the Kharijites sacked the properties and mosques of the Banu Qutay'a and Banu, 'Ali they were purported to have shouted "*le hikama*," a constant refrain of the Kharijites and a reference to God's sovereignty.[76] With the city's orthodox notables' help, the governor put down the rebellion by nightfall and restored order to the city.[77]

'Ubaydallah ibn Ziyad succeeded his father as governor of Iraq in 674 and continued the same campaign Kharijite persecution. Again, in an attempt to purge the Kufan Kharijites and those with Kharijite sympathies, Ibn Ziyad raised an army and killed all seceders or those thought to have Kharijite sympathies.[78] By 678, Ibn Ziyad had expanded his inquisition to suspected quietest Kharijites. Tensions among Kufans and Bashrans alike were ascendant; all wished to avoid the ongoing purge, but a few raised questions in opposition to Ibn Ziyad. 'Urwah ibn Udayyad, a Kufan notable, accused Ibn Ziyad of impiety regarding his Kharijite purge. Ibn Ziyad had Ibn Udayyad and his daughter killed to illustrate the consequences of Kharijite dissidence against the governor.[79]

Ibn Udayyad and his daughter's deaths resulted in Kharijites' emigration from Kufa and an increased response to the governor Ibn Ziyad's Kharijite purge. The brother of Ibn Udayyad, Mirdas ibn Udayyah, led forty Kharijites to Ahwaz, where they would live

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[74] Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari, Volume 18: Between Civil Wars: The Caliphate of Muawiyah*, trans. Michael Morony. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989, 100–101.

[75] Rodney L. Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 17.

[76] Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari Vol. 17*, 111.

[77] Hoyland, Khalifa Ibn Khayyat's *History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 76–80.

[78] Hoyland, 193–95; Rodney L. Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 18.

[79] Hoyland, Khalifa Ibn Khayyat's *History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 196–98.

removed from the community of non-Kharijites and safe from the grasp of Ibn Ziyad.[80] In 681, Mirdas defended Ahwaz against two armies led by Ibn Ziyad, surviving the first and falling in the second with all his brethren outside of the village of Tawwaj.[81]

In the cases of the early Kharijites depicted here, historiographers detailed the Kharijites' opposition to the state's authority. In the writings of al-Tabari and Ibn Khayyat, the Kharijites pose an existential threat to the stability and power of the growing Umayyad caliphate. In consolidating power in Iraq, the Umayyads—through Ibn Ziyad and his father—attempted to eliminate the Kharijites, whose existence was perceived as a threat to the cohesion and stability of the early Muslim peoples and the state. Proceeding forward in time, the same characterization and trend emerge at different points of power consolidation of the Umayyads and Abbasids.

Until 681, Kharijite uprisings were generally small and localized, barring the rather large contingent at the Battle of Siffin.[82] Localized uprisings akin to those detailed above only occurred in Iraq and parts of Persia. However, the succession of Yazid as Caliph upon the death of his father Mu'awiya and the ensuing struggle for power between Yazid and Ibn al-Zubayr brought the Kharijites back into the struggle to define the caliphate; further, Kharijite support of Ibn al-Zubayr in his personal challenge to Yazid would bring about doctrinal disagreements between Kharijite factions and ultimately cause the splintering of the sect.

D.   IBN ZUBAYR AND THE SCHISM OF THE KHARIJITES

Upon Yazid becoming Caliph, revolts across the Umayyad caliphate broke out. The most notable instance is that of Ibn al-Zubayr, who refused to pledge allegiance to Caliph Yazid. Amid the growing opposition to Yazid—and particularly after the Battle of Karbala' in 680, which ended in the death of Caliph 'Ali's son Husayn—Ibn al-Zubayr received

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[80] Hoyland, 198.

[81] Al-Tabari, *Between Civil Wars*, 183–84.

[82] Rodney L. Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 18.

many pledges and oaths holding him as Caliph.[83] These pledges would include the majority of Kharijites from Iraq who were eager to support Ibn al-Zubayr and his challenge to Umayyad hegemony. The ensuing struggle for power and the untimely death of Yazid allowed Ibn al-Zubayr to claim the title of Caliph. However, the Kharijites were not unanimous in supporting Ibn al-Zubayr. The Kharijites questioned Ibn al-Zubayr: "What do you have to say concerning Uthman?"[84] Through this question, the Kharijites tested Ibn al-Zubayr on the grounds of their sectarian belief. Ibn al-Zubayr replied, "I am a friend of [Uthman] in this world and in the next, and a friend of his friends and an enemy of his enemies." The response left the Kharijites divided between two of their leaders; some followed Nafi' ibn al-Azraq, others Najda ibn Amir.[85] This split not only divided the Kharijites in 684 between Nafi' and Najda regarding the statements of Ibn al-Zubayr but set in motion the branching of the Kharijites over critical doctrinal matters. From the evidence provided by al-Shahrastani, Nafi' held that "those who did not join the [Kharijites] and proactively participate in jihad were polytheists and, as such, legitimate targets of violence and plunder, even their women and children."[86] For Najda and his followers, adherence to this doctrine was deemed too extreme, and thus Nafi' was declared an unbeliever. Thus, the schism gave rise to the Najdat and Azariqa.[87]

E.   THE AZARIQA AND THE NAJDAT KHARIJITES

Between the Azariqa and the Najdat, the attributes of the Azariqa are those associated with the Kharijites of the master narrative. The Azariqa, as noted earlier, held extreme views regarding the prosecution of jihad and *takfir* (declaring one to be an unbeliever). The Azariqa interpreted sections of the Qur'an concerning 'Ali and his assassin to extol the latter as "the one who sells himself, seeking the approval of God" and

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[83] Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari, Volume 19: The Caliphate of Yazid B. Mu-Awiyah*, trans. I. K. A. Howard. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994, 189.

[84] Hoyland, *Khalifa Ibn Khayyat's History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 108.

[85] Al-Ṭabari, *The History of Al-Tabari, Volume 20: The Collapse of Sufyanid Authority and the Coming of the Marwanids,* trans. G. R. Hawting. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989, 100–103.

[86] Rodney L. Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 20.

[87] Thomson, 20.

the former in a negative and "contentious" light.[88] A chief concern of Islamic heresiographers and thus a major focus of the master narrative was the Azariqa belief that children of those deemed unbelievers were damned to eternal punishment in hell with their parents. Furthermore, the Azariqa found it permissible to confiscate a waqf (religious endowment) that existed outside of the Kharijite sect.[89] Not only did the Azariqa hold that jihad was compulsory for believers but encouraged the killing of other Muslims considered by the group as non-believers.

The affinity for violence in the name of belief extended to members within its ranks. Those wishing to join the ranks of the Azariqa were put through a test termed the "trial of a soldier."[90] In this trial, the potential member was asked to prove his loyalty by executing a captive. Once he had done so, he gained entry to the sect. If he failed, the potential entrant was deemed an unbeliever and killed on the spot.[91] Harrowing tales, such as that described in the "trial of the soldier," factor into the parable and mythic nature of the master narrative, even though such acts were only perpetrated by a small minority of Kharijites within the Islamic realm. The Azariqa, with their infamous exploits and violent tendencies, act as a phantom residue upon the whole of the Kharijites, which has endured through the ages.

Described as an "indiscriminate massacre," the first of the Azariqa uprisings occurred in the location of the original secession, southern Iraq.[92] Ibn Khayyat and al-Tabari portray the battles waged by the Azariqa as brutal and in the tradition of the Kharijite condition. Nafi' was killed in the initial battles, but the Azariqa continued to succeed in battle from their camp at Ahwaz until 684 and the entrance of al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufra.[93] Appointed by the erstwhile ally of the Azariqa, self-proclaimed caliph Ibn-Zubayr, al-Muhallab pushed the Azariqa out of Ahwaz and pursued them across Kirman and Isfahan

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88 al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 103.

89 al-Shahrastani, 103; Rodney L. Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 20.

90 Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 20.

91 Thomson, 21.

92 Hoyland, *Khalifa Ibn Khayyat's History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 112.

93 Hoyland, 112–13; Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Al-Tabari, Volume 20: The Collapse of Sufyanid Authority and the Coming of the Marwanids*, 164–66; Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 21.

in southwestern Persia.[94] The Azariqa would do battle with al-Muhallab until 696, when internal doctrine struggles yet again split the ranks of the Azariqa Kharijites.[95] Inter-Azariqa fighting wore the factions down to the point to which al-Muhallab was able to drive the remnant bands of Azariqa to the Tabaristan region of northern Persia. However, the Azariqa death knell was sounded by Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, governor of the eastern portion of the Umayyad caliphate, who wiped out the remaining Azariqa.[96] Like the Azariqa, the Najdat would suffer a similar fate in central Arabia.

After the schism that separated the Najdat from the Azariqa in 684, the Najdat established a state in central Arabia; however, like the Azariqa, internal disputes severed the Najdat state. At its zenith, the state reached from Oman to Bahrain to al-Hassa to its capital in central Arabia and matched the military power of the Caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik.[97] The state was powerful enough that 'Abd al-Malik sought diplomatic avenues to resolve issues rather than challenge them outright.[98] Several of the Najdat leaders sought control of the various portions of the empire for themselves, namely, 'Atiyya ibn al-Aswad pursued a Najdat Imamate in Oman.[99] Additional disagreements concerning al-Najda's leadership and his willingness to forgive non-believers whose ignorance of Islam was considered a grave sin by the Kharijites up to that time continued. Such disagreements led to the removal of Najda from power and his subsequent murder.[100] Caliph Abd al-Malik, capitalizing on the disarray within the ranks of the Najdat, sent an army to Arabia and eradicated the Najdat state and all of its inhabitants.[101]

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[94] Al-Ṭabarī, T*he History of Al-Tabari, Volume 20: The Collapse of Sufyanid Authority and the Coming of the Marwanids,* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989, 166–72.

[95] Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari, Volume 22: The Marwanid Restoration: The Caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik,* trans. Everett K. Rowson. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989, 150–70.

[96] Al-Tabari, 164–162; Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 194.

[97] Thomson, 22.

[98] Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari, Vol. 19,* 197; Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari, Volume 21: The Victory of the Marwanids,* trans. Michael Fishbein. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015, 119.

[99] Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 22; ʹAbd al-Ameer ʹAbd Dixon, *The Umayyad Caliphate, 684–705*, 1st ed. (London: Luzac, 1971), 171.

[100] Al-Tabari*, The History of Al-Tabari Vol. 21*, 206–33; Dixon, *The Umayyad Caliphate*, 65–86/684-705. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015, 174.

[101] Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 22.

F.   THE MASTER NARRATIVE IN CONTEMPORARY STUDIES

In almost all medieval heresiographies and histories, the Kharijite master narrative generally subsides around this period, approximately around the end of the seventh century A.D. Heresiographers, such as Shahrastani, continued to document the Kharijites' splintering during the Abbasid Caliphate, focusing on their unorthodox doctrine and their pseudo-anarchic way of life.[102] The medieval scholars of the period continue to describe the various Kharijite rebellions that occur over the next two centuries, applying the same polemical narrative derived from the original narrative. By the dawn of the eighth century, all Kharijites save the Ibadiyya in Oman and pockets of North Africa, were soundly eliminated by the state. In the case of the Ibadiyya, their quietism and doctrinal differences—namely those which allow them to co-exist with non-Kharijite Muslims and the eschewing of Azariqa tendencies for violence[103]—led to their ultimate survival.

Contemporary understanding of the Kharijites in both the Western and non-Western corpus has been indelibly affected by the Master Kharijite narrative, often with the group being presented with a toxic façade. Whether modern scholars accept the epic narrative—read that of the heresiographers—at face value or Arab apologists attempt to combat the master narrative, the constructed Kharijite identity is intrinsically linked to the lexicon of the eleventh and twelfth-century polemical scholars.

There are distinct misperceptions generated from the master narrative that continue to permeate the mainstream understanding of the Kharijites within the Islamic tradition. Of the many, the misperception of the Kharijites as an essentialist, malignant group is the most historically sticky; moreover, this misperception was arguably the primary goal of the polemicists who constructed the narrative, the Kharijites were considered a "cancer within the community."[104] In turn, this characterization gave clear justification for the Caliphate

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[102] al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, chap. 4.

[103] al-Shahrastani, 114–15.

[104] Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam"; al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, chap. 4.

and the orthodox *ulema*, which the Caliphate represented—to systematically and violently excise the Kharijites from the Islamic community.

The religious and cultural stickiness of the Kharijite master narrative pervades the corpus of modern scholarship. Among many Western scholars of Islam, the master narrative defines the discourse surrounding the Kharijites. Daniel W. Brown, in *A New Introduction to Islam,* describes the Kharijites as zealots "[willing] to sell their lives in martyrdom."[105] Though Brown does tacitly acknowledge the complexity and concomitant political nature of the Kharijite impetus by describing them as "principled egalitarians," he accepts the orthodox and polemical dialogue that undergirds the mainstream narrative of the sect.[106] Hussam Timani notes that both Western and non-Western scholars of Islam have used the narrative "to promote and reflect modern ideologies and religious beliefs," notably modern Islamic fundamentalism and "psychological ideologies."[107] Brown and other Western scholars appear to offer the general interpretations of Muslim heresiographers and historiographers; by accepting and transmitting this narrative, they promulgate the accepted tradition in a non-critical manner that redacts and ignores other sources that would deepen the contemporary understanding of the Kharijites. Other scholars who have commented on the Kharijites use a limited amount of medieval, polemical quotes and single-sourced interpretations of the group.[108] Thus, the Kharijites' legacy is reified into "mono-dimensional extremists"[109] in which the only concern of the first sectarians of Islam is strict adherence to doctrine, regardless of the cost to human life, society, and the cohesion of the Caliphate.

Of the many redactions in the narrative of the Kharijites, medieval Islamic scholarship neglects the secular factors governing the behavior of the group in order to

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[105] Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, Third edition (Hoboken, NJ Chichester Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 163; Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 23.

[106] Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, 139; Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 24.

[107] Timani, Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites, 115.

[108] Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 24.

[109] Thomson, 24.

focus on its violent tendencies as opposed to its social, economic, and political desires. Among Kharijite complaints were those of the pre-eminence of tribal law, the ascendancy of the Quraysh, and the division of booty from the wars of Islamic expansion.[110] Before the events of the secession at Siffin, tribes traditionally associated with the Qurra' of Iraq grew increasingly critical of the corrupt reign of 'Uthman and the economic and political hegemony of the notables of Medina and receipt of greater portions of fay lands, or the lands claimed or derived from battle.[111] The "inveterate malcontents" and "innately rebellious individuals" brought claims against the Ansar (citizens of Medina) that resulted in a chain of violent events in Medina and Kufa.[112] In this case, the proto-Kharijites, rather than basing their desires on Quranic verses, were motivated by the corruption of tribal law and the enrichment of the Quraysh.[113] Other tribal leaders who would go on to be Kharijites railed against the expansion of the power and wealth of the Umayyad governors. The proto-Kharijites under the banner of Ibn al-Ash'ath argued that they were not granted the proper apportionment of land due to their participation in previous military campaigns. They argued that the Umayyad governor intended to "devour the territory and appropriate [its] wealth, thereby extending his dominion," leaving fallow land to the proto-Kharijites.[114] Again, the formulation of Kharijite motivations ulterior to those depicted in the master narrative are omitted from the formative writings of the twelfth century to demonize the Kharijites rather than present them as a group with sympathetic political, economic, and social complaints against the Caliphate.

The Kharijites were far from the only sect or group that instigated violent uprisings and dissent; rather, the master narrative and the various medieval Islamic histories paper-over the many rebellions and insurrections motivated by various compulsions—religious

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[110] Brünnow, "Die Charidschiten unter den ersten Omayyaden. Ein beitrag zur geschichte des ersten islamischen jahrhunderts ..."; Wellhausen, *Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam*; Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites*, 49–60. Both scholars are referenced in Timani. Brunnow's original work is in German.

[111] Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari, Volume 15: The Crisis of the Early Caliphate: The Reign of 'Uthman A.D. 644–656/A.H. 24–35*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015, 112–13.

[112] Al-Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabari, Volume 15,* 133–37.

[113] Al-Tabari, 133–40.

[114] Al-Tabari, 5.

or otherwise—that bear a close resemblance to those of the Kharijites.[115] Notably, that of Ibn al-Zubayr, discussed previously, the pro-'Alid rebellion in Kufa led by al-Mukhtar ibn Abi'Ubaydah al-Thaqafi, and that of ʿAbd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn al-Ashʿath in what is now the Sistan region of Iran.[116] In all cases, the insurrections were caged in religious motivation with the concomitant political machinations against the Caliphate's authority. Violent, anti-establishment, and religiously based, all three revolts bear a striking resemblance to that of the Kharijites in all but name.

The violent events and tendencies of the Azariqa and their extreme resolution of doctrinal differences with proto-orthodox Muslims and other Kharijites represent focal points of the master narrative; however, the focus of Islamic polemicists on the sensational and disconcerting aspects of the Kharijites betrays the prevalence of violence, unrest, and rebellion that colored the layers of sectarian division in the first centuries of Islam. The massacres perpetrated at the hands of the Azariqa are extolled as the model of the Kharijite condition. This is problematic in two respects: the distillation of Kharijite identity to a minority of actors incorrectly simplifies the diversity of Kharijite action and doctrine. The violent behavior exhibited by the Azariqa is not aberrant behavior when contrasted with other sectarians and groups of the time.[117] The massacre of three thousand seceders at al-Nahrawan, the bloody execution of Abu Bilal, and the massacre of Husayn and his followers are just three examples of the real violence and brutality of the age. In the early years of Islam, violence was the chief tool of compulsion; violence perpetrated at the hands of the Umayyad or Abbasid governments was no more or less violent than that committed by the Kharijite group. The Kharijites' expressions were just one arrow in a quiver of dissension that plagued the early Islamic period and caliphal authority. In this context, why were the revolts of Kharijite doppelganger movements not vilified in the same manner as those of the original Kharijites? Why are these movements omitted from the lexicon of heresiography that relegates the Kharijites to infamy and the status of a timeless and essentialist evil?

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[115] Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 169.

[116] Hoyland, *Khalifa Ibn Khayyat's History on the Umayyad Dynasty*, 121–23.

[117] Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 27.

G.   A NARRATIVE THAT STICKS

Crucial to this work and the longevity, strength, and indelible qualities of the Kharijite master narrative—and its subsequent use as a curse or aspersion—is the following question: who was motivated to portray the Kharijites in such a manner, and what was their motivation? During the Abbasid era, the Caliphate's need to consolidate power within its domain and legitimize the government's authority against rival claims to the Caliphate are the two main factors that led to the marginalization and vilification of the Kharijites. The master narrative of the original seceders indicates that scholars—those of the heresiographical and historiographical bent—labeled the Kharijites as the bogeymen of Islam; the near annihilation of the Kharijites meant that the narrative would likely not be refuted by extant Kharijite populations or met with any threat from remaining members of the community.

With their divergent and unorthodox doctrine, the Kharijites proved exemplars of purported dissidence, rebellion, and evil…so much so that the group was a perfect target for polemicists. With the Abbasid caliphate's founding and the destruction of the Umayyads, the religiously caged discourse that the Kharijites utilized to justify opposition to the Umayyads was no longer relevant;[118] the change in regime and religious discourse minimized their relevance. Their ideological and physical obsolescence was only made clearer by their elimination from the Caliphate's core.[119] Being fringe in both doctrine and location, the Kharijites' reduced position proved ideal for those wishing to define Islamic orthodoxy and the religious and social mores of the Abbasid era.

Throughout the ages, the Kharijites came to represent the eternal form of rebellion, duplicity, and the dangers of religious extremism while simultaneously serving the political ends of both religious and political authority to legitimate and justify the reign of the Abbasids and the orthodoxy of the *ulema*. Their heresy, along with the many other heresies of Islamic antiquity, were judged as too extreme and illegitimate. Orthodox Sunnism emerged as the moderate form of Islam from the heresies deemed too extreme and

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[118] Kenney, *Heterodoxy and Culture*.

[119] Kenney.

destabilizing; though the contradistinctions drawn by the proto-Sunni *ulema* are generally common to all heresies, the Kharijite heresy was viewed as too extreme by most Islamic sects and many of those deemed heretical by the Sunnis. This distinction makes the Kharijite heresy unique. Thus, the imagery and narrative associated with the Kharijites served as a useful and nearly universally understood tool for the Abbasids to demonize the Kharijites and the Umayyads, all while lifting up the Abbasids. As discussed previously, Al-Shahrastani elucidates in *al-Milal* that a Kharijite is "whoever rebelled against the legitimate imam accepted by the people…whether this rebellion took place at the time of the Companions [of the Prophet] against the rightfully guided imams, or their worthy successors, or against the imams of any time."[120] This definition places the Kharijites as a perpetual challenge to humanity, its decency, the rule of law, and above all, those appointed to rule over the masses. The Kharijites are further associated with Iblis, an intercessor associated with the devil and a source of evil in the Islamic vernacular.[121] This association gives political and violent powers, vested in a religious dialogue, to those in power so that those whom they protect are safeguarded from the pernicious and malevolent grasp of the heretical Kharijites.

In arguing this work's main thesis, it is vital to understand the metamorphosis of the master narrative of the Kharijites—a sectarian group among the many of its time—into an unquestionably negative phenomenon to serve the purposes of consolidating state power and legitimacy in the early years of the Abbasid Caliphate.[122] At the time of its creation, the master narrative helped solidify the emerging Islamic orthodoxy and enshrine the power of not only the Abbasids but the innovated institution of the Caliphate itself. This study argues that the staying power and impact of the Kharijite narrative—and the use of the brand Kharijite—has proven useful to modern regimes and non-state actors within the Middle East, seeking to solidify their authority and legitimacy through the well-worn Islamic idioms understood by an Islamic polity.

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[120] al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 100.

[121] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 29–30.

[122] Thomson, "The Khawarij and Religious Identity Formation in Early Islam," 28.

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III. THE MODERN EGYPTIAN CASE

As reviewed in the previous chapter, the master narrative of the Kharijites portrayed the group as an essentialist malady haunting humankind to promote the power and authority of the caliphate. Though the polemical narrative of the Kharijites belongs to a bygone era almost a millennium removed from the present day, the narrative's re-emergence in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt attests to its potency and longevity within Islamic religiopolitical discourse, as well as the state's ability to mobilize sentiments and opinions by invoking the narrative. However, no more overt instance of the term's utilization exists than in post-Revolutionary Egypt, where the confluence of nascent authority, governing ideologies, popular legitimacy, and the formation of the Weberian state all occurred within an Islamic cultural context.

From the overthrow of the Egyptian monarchy in 1952 to the regime of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, the use of the term Kharijite has permeated and at times dominated the political and religious discourse in Egypt. Though the invocation of the term was meant to delegitimize the Islamist groups all while imbuing the regime with Islamic legitimacy, it only partially accomplished its original goal. Rather, the charge of Kharijite was met with varying responses based on the time of its use and the context in which it was invoked. As the understanding of religious extremism and politically motivated violence evolved, so too did the understanding and consequences of using the Kharijite epithet.[123] The syllogistic charge of neo-Kharijism used against Islamist groups proved helpful by temporarily mobilizing support for the ruling regime by casting Nasser as 'Ali and instilling his ideology with an Islamic character. However, the persistent invocation of the Kharijite narrative disguised the failings of the Egyptian state and the regime's ability to provide a solution to the complex milieu of social, economic, and political issues in which the "neo-Kharijites" emerged.[124] By evoking the master narrative and laying it over the ill-fitting mold of twentieth-century Egyptian society, the Egyptian regime sought to consolidate

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[123] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, chap. 4.

[124] The term "neo-Kharijite" is a moniker often given to Islamist groups, whether violent or non-violent, to associate the organization with characteristics of the ancient Kharijites.

their political power and eliminate challenges from outgroups deemed extremists, Islamists, and illegitimate.

Before proceeding with the era of Nasser, a discussion of the years before the 1952 Revolution and its immediate aftermath bear discussion in order to understand the religious, economic, and political milieu of Egypt.

A.   THE BUILD-UP TO REVOLUTION

The period from 1919 to 1952 is often deemed the liberal age of Egypt or "the liberal experiment" marked by indicative liberal traits and institutions; however, the period exemplified the political and socio-economic hallmarks of the waning colonial era and British colonial rule.[125] While many Egyptians living in the urban and cosmopolitan environments of Cairo and Alexandria, as well as those of the political and aristocratic elite, benefited from the modernization dating back to the rule of Muhammed 'Ali in the late nineteenth century, the majority of Egyptians did not. Wafd party political elites were viewed as royal or British proxies; instead, many Egyptians viewed the Wafd as a roadblock to Egypt's political progression and modernization.[126] Though nominally independent, Egypt under the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 was all but a dependency of the United Kingdom, which maintained full control of the Suez Canal and critical positions across the country at the end of the Second World War.[127] Resentment of colonial rule and growing Egyptian nationalism, combined with the overtly inept and corrupt monarchy of King Faruq and growing Egyptian disenchantment with the political and economic life, made Egypt ripe for revolution.

In pre-revolutionary Egypt, the creation of powerful religious movements and political cabals –namely the Muslim Brotherhood, and later, the Free Officers— undergirded the crescendo of political and military discord that would eventually result in the Revolution of 1952. The Free Officers, a secret clique of military officers and civilians

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[125] Arthur Goldschmidt, Jr., *Modern Egypt: The Formation Of A Nation-State*, 2nd edition (New York; Oxfordshire, 2019), chaps. 7–8.

[126] Goldschmidt, Jr., *Modern Egypt,* 81.

[127] Goldschmidt, Jr., 91.

consisting of Gamal Abd al-Nasser, Anwar al-Sadat, and other young officers such as Zakariya Muhyi al-Din and Abd al-Hakim Amir, coalesced in the 1940s out of associations made at the Egyptian Military Academy and through service in the Egyptian military.[128] From their often humble beginnings in middle- and lower-class families, the young men of the Free Officers, were ambitious for not only themselves but for their nation.[129] Though bound by association, the Free Officers had little, if any, unifying ideology. Though "Nasserism" would come to define the Free Officer movement in the late 1950s and 60s, "the young officers felt that Egypt's welfare immediately depended on destroying all points of the power triangle: the Wafd, the king, and the British."[130] The Free Officers, in conjunction with the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist organizations, perceived themselves as capable of overcoming the acien régime.

Along with the Free Officers, the Muslim Brotherhood formed the other prominent pre-revolutionary movement that saw Egypt's future in Islamic terms. Founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928 in Ismailia, the Society of Muslim Brothers sought the restoration of Islamic institutions as the principal feature of Egypt's political future. In contrast to the Free Officers' vague and anti-colonial fervor, the Muslim Brotherhood saw the fabric of Egyptian life in an idealized, moral-religious paradigm, one which had been constructed from its founding in 1928 to the time of the Revolution in 1952.[131] The Brotherhood eschewed the political, economic, and secular trappings of Westernized societies' thrust upon the Egyptian people in favor of the totality of the Islamic system. As such, the Brotherhood rejected political parties, constitutions, and elected parliament, and above all, the relegation of Islam into a distinctly religious sector of Egyptian life severed from that of the political, social, and economic. The group reached its zenith during the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, with membership reaching over five-hundred thousand, two thousand established branches, a women's group aptly named the Muslim Sisters, and a vital youth

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[128] Goldschmidt, Jr., 103–5.

[129] Goldschmidt, Jr., 103.

[130] Goldschmidt, Jr., 103.

[131] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, First Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 21–22.

component called the Rovers.[132] Within the life of the many rural and impoverished Egyptian, the Brotherhood was responsible for the provision of public services, welfare, clinics, and schools; however, the militant inclinations of individual members of the Muslim Brotherhood directly led to the codification of the outwardly violent agenda of the Brotherhood's Secret Apparatus.[133]

The Secret Apparatus, the clandestine and violent arm of the Muslim Brotherhood that executed attacks against Western establishments and conducted political assassination, presaged the Brotherhood's characterization as neo-Kharijites. The Secret Apparatus, its growing brazen and overt acts of violence and assassinations against fellow revolutionaries and the increasingly violent manifestos of notable Brothers such as Sayyed Qutb, led to the growing divide and the eventual irreparable schism between the revolutionary Free Officers and the Muslim Brotherhood.[134] This break between the two groups in concert with the overlaid political and religious dialogue proved fertile ground for the re-emergence of the phenomenon of Kharijism and the split between the orthodoxy of the newly minted regime and that of a rebellious, intransigent minority of extremists.

B. TWO VISIONS OF ONE EGYPT: THE SCHISM OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD AND THE FREE OFFICERS

The revolutionary coalition of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Free Officers deteriorated between the two years after the revolution; what was once a mutually beneficial political relationship devolved into one that would define the dichotomy of the orthodox, centralized authority of the Free Officer regime and the Muslim Brotherhood. In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, the Muslim Brothers were incorporated into the government formed by the Free Officers.[135] High Ranking members of the Brotherhood were granted "special consultive status" and even cabinet-level positions with proximity to

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[132] Goldschmidt, Jr., *Modern Egypt*, 99.

[133] Goldschmidt, Jr., 99.

[134] Ana Belén Soage, "Islamism and Modernity: The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 10, no. 2 (June 1, 2009): 191, https://doi.org/10.1080/14690760903119092.

[135] Goldschmidt, Jr., *Modern Egypt*, chaps. 8–9.

power and policymaking.[136] Sayed Qutb, a leading member of the Brotherhood in the first years of the revolution, was the only non-Free Officer, civilian member of the revolutionary council in the two years before his arrest in 1954.[137] Though members of the Brotherhood were suspicious of the Free Officers' socialist and secular motivations, many of the revolutionary government's first political moves seemed compatible with the Islamist vision the Brotherhood had for Egypt. The banning of political parties, a move that the free officers enacted swiftly in an attempt to stifle their opponents, seemed part and parcel of the Islamist agenda.[138] The Muslim Brotherhood, however, was notably excluded from the ban on political organizations and societies.[139] As Jeffrey Kenney notes, "since it was unthinkable for Islam to have to compete for Muslim support every election cycle, only one party needed to represent the people—the one that instituted Islamic rule."[140] This political move and others like it formed the façade in which the Free Officers embraced particular notions from a diverse range of ideology sets, all designed to bolster their authority and confer legitimacy upon their fledgling regime. The Free Officer's embrace of the Muslim Brotherhood was just as thin.

Though nominally part of the newly formed regime, the Muslim Brotherhood's power was diluted and held up as a superficial symbol of unity to extort the maximum political, social, and religious concessions from the Brotherhood's organization and apparatus. The Muslim Brotherhood, with its expansive social and public goods networks across the country, and chiefly, its name recognition, conferred a sense of legitimacy familiar to the Egyptian people upon the newly formed regime.[141] The language of socialism, secularism, and later, Nasserism, were not components of the Islamic-Egyptian lexicon that permeated the populous mid-century; but that of the Brotherhood, the lexicon based in the Quran, Hadith, and the socio-religious networks, was widely understood by

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[136] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 61.

[137] Soage, "Islamism and Modernity," 191.

[138] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 61.

[139] Soage, "Islamism and Modernity," 191.

[140] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 61.

[141] Kenney, 61.

the Egyptian people and the broader Arab world. Though the Brotherhood shied from the political arena and the venal practices of politics, they were consummate political animals in every sense of the term; the leadership of the Brotherhood had stumped, politicked, and established outreach to every corner of Egypt, and had long-established ties dating back decades. However, the tokenization of the Brotherhood and its disenfranchisement from real political power was clear to their leadership, causing the rapid dissolution of the one-sided political marriage.[142]

After repeated political disagreements and increasingly violent confrontations, the relationship between the Brotherhood and the Free Officers collapsed, presaging the following half-centuries' struggle between the state and the Islamist movements. Attempts to salvage the relationship by Colonel Nasser, General Neguib, and Supreme Guide of the Brothers, Hasan al-Hudaybi, ultimately failed due to the gulf of political obstacles between the groups.[143] The political animosity between the two organizations had reached a violent fever pitch. While giving an open-air speech in Alexandria in 1954, the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to assassinate Colonel Nasser.[144] The assassination attempt on Nasser provided the requisite circumstances to neutralize the Brotherhood and its organization systematically.[145] Through a series of public kangaroo courts and trials where the judicial pretext was dubious at best, many high-ranking members of the Muslim Brotherhood were sentenced to death while others were sentenced to life in prison. This assassination attempt and the precipitating political theater yielded the first cycle of the highly publicized political rancor between the Brotherhood and the state.[146] However, more critically, the assassination attempt provided an opening for the Free Officers to characterize their opponents as not only a political bogeyman, but more specifically, an Islamic bogeyman. By adopting the religious idioms so well-worn and understood by all Muslims, the Free Officers co-opted religious institutions, the faculties of state, and

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[142] Kenney, 64–67.

[143] Soage, "Islamism and Modernity," 191.

[144] Soage, 191.

[145] Soage, 191.

[146] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 150.

mobilized popular sentiments against the Muslim Brotherhood to buttress their political power and secure the legitimacy lacking in their revolutionary regime. In essence, by invoking the Kharijite "master narrative," Nasser and the government re-invented an essentialist struggle between state and outgroup grounded in an Islamic epithet.

C.   NATION-STATE FORMATION AND POLITICAL-RELIGION AS IDEOLOGY

The suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1954 marks a point where two influential concepts of the formation, development, and sustainment of the modern nation-state—particularly those of post-colonial and under-developed origins—are critical in understanding the re-emergence of the master narrative of the Kharijites: Max Weber's definition of the modern state and David Ernest Apter's thesis on political religion. Max Weber defines the modern state as "a human community that [successfully] claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."[147] In Egypt's case, the nascent regime of Nasser and the Free Officers, in overthrowing the Muhammed 'Ali dynasty and installing a novel form of government, theoretically met the criteria for a modern state but sought to make Weber's maxim a reality.[148] By eliminating the Muslim Brotherhood's ability to contest or express political power through violence or authoritative action, the Free Officers established their ability, albeit tenuously, to monopolize the use of violence within the bounds of the Egyptian state.[149] While the Brotherhood and other Islamist groups would challenge this throughout Egypt's modern history, Nasser and his regime had consolidated this power over Egypt's principal territories and within the minds of the Egyptian people. In 1954, however, Nasser controlled a state but was searching for a legitimizing ideology to guide Egypt into modernization.

The second concept that applies to invoking the Kharijites' master narrative is "political religion," and Nasser's co-opting of Islamic symbolism to increase the legitimacy of the state. As defined by Apter, political religion is an ideological system in which "the

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[147] Weber, Gerth, and Mills, *From Max Weber*, 78.

[148] Weber, Gerth, and Mills, 78.

[149] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, chap. 2.

state and the regime take on sacred characteristics" that imbues the regime and its leadership with god-like or religious qualities.[150] A regime bound by a political religion ideology does not necessarily take on the multifaceted, multidimensional trappings of religion but may selectively recall "the common trappings of religion such as ceremony, doctrine, and myth."[151] By blending many modern ideologies with that of the Islamic idiom understood by the masses and well established within the extant social and religious institutions of Egypt, Nasser, through the process of establishing a complex and diverse ideology, adopted a selective panoply of iconic Islamic themes, myths, and rituals to express his innovated ideology in a way relatable and consumable by Egyptians. Apter contends that political religion is a useful tool of popular mobilization; infant states utilize political religion to rapidly organize and re-shuffle the economic and societal status quo without the necessary institutional, social, and political infrastructure generally required to enact such change.[152] In discussing Nasser's use of political religion, Jeffrey Kenney notes:

> For any nation, modernization brings change, innovation, and dislocation, all of which place stress on individuals, families, and other traditional social institutions. Mobilization systems attempt to offset this stress by politicizing all spheres of life and by drawing citizens into a cult of the state. They avert, at least temporarily, the bane of modernizing societies—a crisis of identity—through the organizational and coercive powers of the central authority. Meaning and identity, then, are products of the state, imposed through a combination of strategies: authoritarian policies, political rituals, propaganda, and, if necessary, the police.[153]

In the instance of Egypt, the formation of Nasserism and the contrivance to use political religion to confer regime and popular legitimacy was an ambitious undertaking that only marginally allowed Nasser to achieve his political, economic, and social modernization scheme. Nasser viewed secular Arabism as the lynchpin of his hybridized ideology. Yet, the use of the Kharijite narrative placed the state within an understood and accepted Islamic paradigm; thus, fundamental religious and historical identities shaped the modern Egyptian

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[150] David Ernest Apter, *Political Religion in the New Nations* (Berkeley: University of California, 1964), 61.

[151] Apter, 61; Kenney, cited in *Muslim Rebels*, 62.

[152] Apter, *Political Religion in the New Nations*, 61; cited in Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 62.

[153] Apter, *Political Religion in the New Nations,* 61; quoted in Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 62.

narrative of orthodox, state-centric groups against marginalized outgroups. In Nasser's eyes, Islam was an exploitable cultural-religious mechanism in which authority, longevity, and long-established tenets could be wielded and bent to the needs of the state, and above all, the leader.[154]

D.   RELIGIOUS VALIDATION: AL-AZHAR AND THE STATE-FICTION OF OFFICIAL ISLAM

In the modern history of Egypt, both before and after the revolution, religious institutions, and the infrastructure of "official Islam" has been connected to, if not directly under the control and direction of the political establishment. Al-Azhar, the foremost school and authority within Sunni Islam, and "the embodiment of official Islam," was no exception to this phenomenon.[155] Though changes to the structure and organization of Azhar by both pre-and post-revolutionary governments of Egypt gave the ruling elite control of the Orthodox Islamic levers within Egypt and beyond, Nasser's reformation of al-Azhar demonstrated the power of official Islam to execute the will of the state. Therefore, it is pivotal to understand the role of al-Azhar in invoking the master Kharijite narrative.

In the wake of the revolution of 1952, the Free officers courted Azharite leaders through soft engagement. Religious institutions, including al-Azhar, had undergone many reforms in the pre-revolutionary period to include social and religious functions and religious authorities being systemized and limited by legal and bureaucratic code.[156] The Free Officers expanded upon these early reforms in order achieve a two-fold outcome "that sent mixed messages about the secular versus religious nature of the regime: weaken existing religious institutions that hindered reform, and create new religious institutions that subverted traditional authority and empowered voices of reform."[157] First, the Free Officers created the Islamic Congress—a purely symbolic international Islamic body

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[154] The subject of non-state actors and groups using the charge of Kharijism will be discussed in the next chapter.

[155] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 68.

[156] Kenney, 69.

[157] Kenney, 69.

headed by Anwar Sadat, a then member of the Free Officers—to displace the religious guidance of traditional institutions, both within Egypt and abroad.[158] Second, the Free Officers created a parallel structure and set of responsibilities with the Ministry of Awqaf (religious endowments) by creating the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, which served the same function the Ministry under its Director-General. This permitted the regime's religious and social reforms to proceed unhindered by recalcitrant religious holdouts within the existing religious structure. However, the 1961 restructuring of al-Azhar would be the most sweeping, one that "could provide political tribune, could represent a counter-power to the Muslim Brothers if used properly, and provide [the regime] with its Islamic legitimacy."[159]

Though reform of al-Azhar and the Ministry of Awqaf were codified in the 1961 al-Azhar Law—Law No. 103—which maintained the façade of al-Azhar's independence, its remaining autonomy was now subject to complete control of the state.[160] Nasser exploited existing rifts within the clerical class of the Azhari scholars; progressive and conservative factions were split over organizational matters and the intellectual morass of the university.[161] Al-Azhar became a public university with its faculty, staff, and students becoming subject to government oversight and intervention. The curriculum of the university now included the secular subject of the arts and sciences. The Grand Imam, or Shaykh al-Azhar, was now directly appointed by the Egyptian president, bestowed with the rank of minister, and salaried on the state roles. According to Malika Zeghal, "al-Azhar as an institution became the religious tribune of the regime of Nasser and gave religious edicts or fatwas as the authoritarian state required them. At the head of the institution, official *ulema* served the political power's interests once those few who refused to submit to the demands of the regime resigned."[162] The weakening of al-Azhar, both as an

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[158] Kenney, 70, also see *Nahwa ba'th jadid*, a series of the Islamic Congress that ran from August to September.

[159] Robert W. Hefner, Muhammad Qasim Zaman, and Zeghal, Malika, *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 118.

[160] Egypt, Law No. 103 for 1961 Re-Organising Al-Azhar and Its Affiliated Institutions (July 5,1961) (Cairo: Al Azhar University, 1961).

[161] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 70.

[162] Hefner, Zaman, and Zeghal, Malika, *Schooling Islam*, 118.

independent religious institution capable of providing Islamic legal jurisprudence and an autonomous political actor within the landscape of Nasser's Egypt, left room for other state-dominated apparatuses to control the religiopolitical narrative of the new republic

Through the restructuring of al-Azhar, the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs came to dominate all aspects of religious policy within Egypt and played a crucial role in framing the Muslim Brotherhood as neo-Kharijites. Notably, the publishing arm of al-Azhar, Minbar al-Islam, would come to play an important role in legitimizing the authority of the new republic and religiously sanctifying their monopoly on the legitimate use of violence.[163] While Minbar al-Islam was key in religiously socializing Nasserism and the suite of reforms enacted by the Free Officers, the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs in conjunction with other organizations of the state, and state-held publications such as al-Ahram, Egypt's newspaper of record, were the critical amplifiers of the religious discourse promulgated by the state;[164] this message cast the Muslim Brotherhood as the Kharijite outgroup seeking to destroy the fabric of Egyptian society while the guardians of the new Egyptian society, under the aegis of the Islamic shroud al-Azhar provided, sought to modernize and advance the state of Egypt. The penetration of the state within the ecosystem of "official Islam" and its mechanisms of widespread outreach proved useful in the 1965 prosecution of the Muslim Brotherhood, in both judicial proceedings and within the domain of public opinion. As Jeffrey Kenney emphasizes, "it was the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs that also issued a collection of anti–Muslim Brother essays entitled *The Opinion of Religion Concerning the Brothers of Satan*, that captured the prominence and type of anti-extremist rhetoric" actively used by the state throughout the 1960s and 70s.[165] Thusly, the charge of Kharijism fit within the arrangement of the state-controlled Islamic orthodoxy to minimize the threat of the Muslim Brotherhood and confer the legitimacy sought by the Free Officers.

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[163] Weber, Gerth, and Mills, *From Max Weber*, 78.

[164] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 71–104.

[165] Kenney, 71.

E. THE CHALLENGE OF THE NEO-KHARIJITES: SAYYID QUTB AND THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

This section documents the use of the master narrative of the Kharijites by state or state-associated entities within Egypt in the 1960s against the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as an analysis of the writings of Sayed Qutb that were deemed to be those of a Kharijite. While this period does include two discrete instances, in 1948 and 1952, respectively, the government directly charged the Muslim Brotherhood of Kharijism or the handful of popular publications that tepidly dabbled in pseudo-heresiography and the branding of modern Islamist movements.[166] According to Richard Mitchell, both instances saw the charge leveled against the group, followed by a swift and substantial rebuttal. While these cases do not substantially influence the adoption of the term as a curse by Nasser and later leaders of Egypt, it demonstrates the existence of the narrative within Egyptian society and the government's awareness of its potential use in minimizing or neutralizing the Muslim Brotherhood.

The master narrative of the Kharijites became increasingly important in 1965 when it was discovered that the Muslim Brotherhood "attempted" a coup and political assassinations. Just eight months after his 15-year stint in prison following the banning of the Brotherhood in 1954, Qutb and a large number of Muslim Brothers were arrested and sentenced to death or further imprisonment in 1965.[167] Charges against Qutb and the brothers centered around a plot to overthrow the revolutionary regime of Nasser, among other accusations—planned assassinations of celebrities and politicians as well as the destruction of the Aswan High Dam.[168] In this second cycle of the Egyptian's state crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, the writings of Qutb, notably *Ma'alim fi'l-Tariq* (*Signposts along the Road*) and *Fizilal al-Qur'an* (*In the Shade of the Qur'an*), were the centerpiece to the case of the state against the Brotherhood and the grounds for labeling

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166 Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 320.

167 Soage, "Islamism and Modernity," 191.

168 William Shepard, *Sayyid Quṭb* (Routledge Handbooks Online, 2008), 406, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203019139.ch34.

Qutb and the Brotherhood as Kharijites.[169] While serving his prison sentence after the 1954 crackdown on the Brotherhood, "Qutb continued his passion for writing, completing the two previous works that became modern classics among Islamists around the world."[170] When arresting Qutb the Muslim Brothers in 1965, Egyptian authorities found copies of *Signposts* in every suspected putschist's homes.[171] Content of both *Signposts* and *In the Shade of the Quran* were held up as neo-Kharijite doctrine that codified the brotherhood behavior of takfir, removal of an unjust/un-Islamic leader, violent Jihad, assassinations, and the Islamic essentialism ascribed to the Kharijites.

Qutb's extensive writings and his understanding of Islam were a product of the early Islamist and Salafist movements and the perceived crisis of Islamic society.[172] Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad' Abduh, the forefathers of the emergent Salafist and Islamist movements in the late nineteenth century, emphasized Islam's rational nature, strict adherence to the text of the Quran, and denounced interpretation of the Quran to fit within the contemporary scientific understanding.[173] Expounding on al-Afghani and Abduh, along with others like Abu al-A'la Mawdudi and Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna, Qutb's writing during his stint in prison from 1954 to 1964 took on an increasingly violent and abstract anti-establishment.[174] The welfare of the urban and rural poor, education, and wealth disparities characterize Qutb's earlier writings. However, *shirk*—generally considered polytheism or idol worship within Islam—and "the failure to recognize the absolute sovereignty of God in areas of life," *hakamiyya,* were the sources of all worldly problems and the political, social, and economic plagues on Islamic society.[175] Qutb held that the entire world, including Muslim societies ruled by secular and non-Islamic ideologies and systems, existed in a state of *jahiliyya*, or ignorance, a period

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169 Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 92.

170 Kenney, 92.

171 Soage, "Islamism and Modernity," 109.

172 Soage, 192; Shepard, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 406.

173 Soage, "Islamism and Modernity," 192.

174 Shepard, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 406.

175 Shepard, 406.

of polytheism and before the revelations of Muhammad.[176] Qutb suggested that worldly efforts to govern by human-made laws and the interpretation of God's laws to meet the needs of humanity were anathema to the Quran. In his interpretation, Islam applied the totality of society and formed a system in which life was ordered according to God's word: science, history, society, politics, the state, economics, and religious institutions. This stark interpretation of Islam, the contrast between Muslim and *kaffir,* unbeliever, presented Muslims living within *jahiliyya* societies with a dilemma to which Qutb had a proposed solution. *Jahiliyya* is so great, in Qutb's estimation, "that Muslims can no longer think and act like Muslims."[177] Thus, Muslim societies are completely absent from the world in which Qutb lives.[178] The contemporary *jahiliyya* society was too pervasive to combat with mere political and social mobilization; rather, true believers must fully comprehend Islam's totality and violently confront *jahiliyya* and its arbiters. In this sense, it was the duty of all true Muslims to fight against the ignorant forces of the state to institute the proper order of Islam within society. In practical terms, Qutb's writings in *Signposts* indicate the formation of an Islamic vanguard, which he refers to as the *talia*', who will lead the Islamic revival with two main goals: bringing the message of Islam to previously so-called Islamic societies and confronting and systemically altering the contemporary institutions, leadership, and ordering of *jahiliyya* society.[179]

The idea of Jihad, or holy war, is a central tenet of Qutb's writing and stands as the moral and religious duty of Muslims when fighting against *jahiliyya* society.[180] Jihad, in Qutb's eyes, was part and parcel of Quranic verse and practiced by the first generations of Muslims living during the time of Muhammad.[181] Thus, as Islam was envisioned as a totality or system of ordering civilization, Jihad was seen as a divine tool or method used to address the totality of issues facing Muslims. Qutb writes that in the contest with

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[176] Sayyed Qutb, *Signposts Along the Road*, *Ideals and Ideologies* (New York; Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2019), 11, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429286827-81; Shepard, *Sayyid Quṭb*, 407.

[177] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 94.

[178] Sayyed Qutb, *Signposts Along the Road*, 21.

[179] Sayyed Qutb, 11–12.

[180] Sayyed Qutb, *In The Shade of the Qur'an, "Fi Zil al Qur'an"* (Markfield: Islamic Foundation, 2009), 83.

[181] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 95.

jahiliyya society, Muslims must wage personal Jihad against false teachings of non-Islamic origins and challenge governments, leaders, and institutions with no basis in Quranic verse.[182] Mere words, Qutb argues, are neither enough to advance the Islamic movement nor dislodge *jahiliyya's* manifestations from the world.[183] Thus, the Islamic movement must logically resort to the sword to exorcise the shirk and *jahiliyya* that permeate civilization.[184] From this, it is clear that the contemporary regimes throughout the Islamic world—or formerly Islamic world, as Qutb would qualify—should be challenged and removed by force. Egypt's government, led by Nasser and the Free Officers, was the primary *jahiliyya* target that Qutb sought to eliminate. Furthermore, Qutb's argument regarding Jihad and his polemical fight against the Egyptian state framed the discourse in which declaring someone as an apostate (takfir) and committing violent acts against other Muslims was acceptable Islamic behavior.

"Whoso judges not according to what God sent down, they are the unbelievers" is a Quranic verse quoted by Qutb in *Signposts* to justify violent acts against those he deems ignorant and the declaration of unbelief against those living under governments of ignorance.[185] Thus, everything within the confines of *jahiliyya* is stained with unbelief and shirk to include the entirety of society, leaders, and above all, the majority of Muslims.[186] This systemic transference of unbelief permits Qutb's vanguard not merely to permit the waging of war against other Muslims but rather making violence against other Muslims and Muslim leaders obligatory.

To further fortify the violence and actions he was advocating, Qutb re-introduced the conception of the Muslim nation—*dar al-harb* (abode of war) and *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam)—to classify contemporary Muslim societies as outside of the true Islamic fray

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182 Sayyed Qutb, *Signposts Along the Road*, 64.

183 Sayyed Qutb, 72–73.

184 Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 94–98.

185 Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, Reprint edition (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015), v. 5:348; Sayyed Qutb, *Signposts Along the Road*, 150.

186 Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 95.

and justify the use of violence against other Muslims.[187] The binary classification of the abode of war and the abode of Islam flows from classical Islamic scholarship that traditionally defines both as the place where the enemies of Islam rule and war is permitted and "where the Muslim state is established, where God's law is enforced."[188] It follows then that modern Muslim societies are within the domain of war as they fail to live by God's law. Therefore, for the Muslim vanguard, war is an acceptable and the primary mechanism for the transition to Islam's abode.

In comparing the neo-Kharijite Muslim Brotherhood to the original Kharijites, we gain a greater understanding of how a single word masks the complexity of a movement and disguises the contemporary factors in which both phenomena exist. At the surface, the existence of the Muslim Brotherhood—their behavior and doctrine—are indicative of the scourge of Kharijism foretold by al-Shahrastani almost a millennium earlier. However, a scrutinized review of the Muslim Brotherhood and the original Kharijites reveals the power of a single term or idea to mask the diversity of religious, economic, and political forces of the day and the ability of a single person or institution to do so.

To respond to Qutb's manifestos, it would take a different form of expertise, one imbued with authority, knowledge, and Islamic credentials, to directly connect the Kharijites of early Islam to their contemporary manifestation. Nasser and the Egyptian regime neither possessed the religious currency nor expertise required for such an undertaking.[189] By bringing al-Azhar under the control of the state with its publications and widespread outreach, the state marshaled the arsenal of orthodoxy and the requisite religious bonafides to construct the identity of the Muslim Brothers in the image of the master Kharijite narrative.

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187 Sayyed Qutb, *Signposts Along the Road*, 150.

188 Sayyed Qutb, 72–73.

189 Qutb's rhetorical style is consistent with the mujahid or warrior rhetoric proposed by Patrick Gaffney, in which "a logic of association dominates which does not specify an intervening interpretive phase or any distinction standing between the divine will and the human imperative."

F.   THE KHARIJITE DISCOURSE: STATE, PUBLIC, AND ISLAMIC PROPAGANDA

Following the banning of the Muslim Brotherhood and the prosecution of Qutb and other members of the society, the Egyptian government began its campaign to brand the Muslim Brotherhood with the curse of the term Kharijite through government-produced publications, state-owned media outlets, and most importantly, the credentialed *ulema* of al-Azhar. Though the master narrative was not immediately deployed in its full form against the Brotherhood, the Egyptian government crafted a mixed media campaign that constructed the Muslim Brotherhood as the modern incarnation of the Kharijites—weaving into the ancient tale terms and imagery that modernized and contextualized the Kharijite phenomenon for its use in the twentieth century.[190] In doing so, terms such as "terrorist" and "anarchists" were intertwined with "heterodoxy" and "apostates" to create a robust characterization of all members of the Brotherhood—not just Qutb and his co-conspirators—whose religious, political, and secular meanings were easily understood by all Egyptians.[191] Therefore, the government's narrative of the Brotherhood as "Neo-Kharijites" resonated with disparate Egyptian audiences and conferred a broad Islamo-political legitimacy upon the regime of the Free Officers, all while demonizing the whole of the Brotherhood.

1.   The Official Review of *Signposts along the Road*: The Society of Brothers as Kharijites

The primary religious rebuke of the Brotherhood came in the form of an official review of *Signposts along the Road* by Sheikh' Abd al-Latif Sibki in *Minbar al-Islam*—the monthly publication of The Supreme Council on Islamic Affairs.[192] In his review, Sheikh Sibki uses select passages from *Signposts* and other works of Qutb to directly draw detailed and sometimes explicit comparisons between the Brotherhood and the Kharijites. Though Minbar al-Islam was consumed by religious audiences, Sheikh Sibki crafted his modern master Kharijite narrative in an accessible and evocative manner. As Kenney notes,

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190 Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, chap. 3.

191 Kenney, chap. 3.

192 Kenney, 104.

the edition of Minbar al-Islam, where Sheikh Sibke's review was published, depicted a book engulfed in flames adjacent to a horned, devilish creature bearing a trident with the subtitle "the constitution of the depraved brothers."[193] To anyone with little knowledge of the article's content or the Muslim Brotherhood, the insinuations are made clear.

Sheikh Sibke begins with a warning to readers of the purportedly nefarious version of Islam portrayed by Qutb and warns against Muslims becoming intoxicated by the words of the Brotherhood's seminal text. He follows his introduction with a rebuttal of Qutb's interpretation of *jahiliyya* and *hakamiyya*: the first to reassure the reader that contemporary Egyptian society and the regime of Nasser was thoroughly Islamic and thus sufficient to govern; and the second, to introduce the roots of the Kharijites narrative and "words spoken by the Kharijites of old."[194] Sheikh Sibke draws the reader's attention to the Kharijite shibboleth of "there is no judgment but God's" and the appearance of it and related passages within *Signposts* and a common refrain of Muslim Brothers.

Stepping through *Signposts*, Sheikh Sibke notes the discord and violence caused by the Kharijites, a direct comparison to the Kharijite's involvement in the first Islamic civil war.[195] He emphasizes the violent and rebellious nature of the Brotherhood and the Kharijites, citing the Kharijites' secession from 'Ali's camp, or as the Sheikh deftly characterizes the event in contemporary terms—Muslims must obey the sovereignty of the ruler. By invoking the story of 'Ali, Sibke connects the anecdote of 'Ali with that of Nasser, two rightful Islamic leaders embattled by those who are uncompromising, dangerous, and seek the destruction of Islamic society.[196] The Kharijites, and thus the Muslim Brotherhood, contributed to the disorder of society by rebelling against the rightful ruler in the name of an exclusionary and extreme form of Islam.

Sheikh Sibke's analysis of *Signposts* is a tale of two Islams: the traditional Islam propagated by official Islam and the exclusive, violent, and twisted Islam put forth by the

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[193] Sheikh 'Abd al-Latif Sibki, review of *Ma'alim fi'l-tariq*, by Sayyid Qutb, Minbar al-Islam (24 November1965): 21.

[194] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 105.

[195] Kenney, 105.

[196] Kenney, 109.

Neo-Kharijites. By recalling the Kharijite metaphor—one that is well-worn and indexed within the early history of Islam—Sibke, official Islam, and the Egyptian state chose a caustic metaphor to combat the Muslim Brotherhood. By doing so, they, in effect, created a religiously encoded bogeyman to achieve their political ends. Nasser and the regime of the Free Officers were the rightful rulers of Egypt, legitimized by the Islamic tethers of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs of Islamic antiquity and imbued with the support of the Islamic arbiter of Al-Azhar. Sibke's normative judgments, based in the language of the Islamic lexicon, are arguments that crystalize the issues confronting Egyptian society in the mid-1960s and the religio-political nexus of legitimacy, stability, and political power.

Although Sibke does not advocate for the particular policies and programs of Nasser and his regime, he tacitly signals his approval of the regime and its efforts through a religious discourse abridged by contemporary concepts. As discussed previously, during Nasser's rule, the traditional relationship between Islamic religious institutions and secular rulers was expunged; Al-Azhar, after its reform, was heavily run and influenced by the state and its leadership. Islam, in the view of al-Azhar, "placed limits on religious and political dissent, [and] the means one can use to change the religious and political status quo."[197] Sibke religiously sanctions Nasser's limitations and persecution of the Brotherhood; however, Sibke is signaling much more than this single event: Sibke is codifying control of political, religious, and social speech the government emanating from any group or person, not strictly the Brotherhood. In a different passage, Sibke concedes that secular law must exist in the modern world to mitigate the gaps in legal and religious matters not covered by Sharia.[198] Again, Sibke grants the religious seal of approval to Nasser's secular efforts of modernization and reforms within Egypt, all while dismissing the calls of Islamists seeking Sharia as the sole legal structure. Beyond Sibke's official review of *Signposts*, the government further co-opted official Islam in their religious propaganda campaign to marginalize the Muslim Brotherhood.

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[197] Kenney, 107.

[198] Kenney, 109.

2. **Popular Media and the Priming of the Egyptian People: Violence and Disruption**

Using much of the same rhetoric and imagery used by Sheikh Sibke in his rebuke of Qutb's writings, state media outlets and the Egyptian press presented the Muslim Brotherhood as a monolithic group with violent and destabilizing tendencies. To reach the panoply of audiences within Egypt, publications concerning the Brotherhood ranged from simple images and caricatures of violence and fundamentalist behavior to a detailed interview with the Sheikh of al-Azhar, Hasan Ma'mun, in prominent publications.

Outlets like *Akhir Sa'a* (Final Hour) and *al-Ahram* (The Pyramids) consistently provided negative accounts of the Brotherhood in line with state and official religious publications. The first pieces covering the Muslim Brotherhood addressed the arrests of Qutb and other prominent brothers, focusing on the danger the Society posed to Egypt.[199] A detailed account of the raid, along with images of weapons caches and extremist literature, was spread across the front cover over many publications, particularly those promulgated by *Akhir Sa'a.*[200] In one account, the author juxtaposes his original assignment of reporting on "smiling children" with the Muslim Brotherhood's plot to assassinate Nasser and disrupt Egyptian society.[201] The author credits the Egyptian people with the downfall (banning) of the Brotherhood and the defense of the revolution. This piece and many others like it attempted to achieve its objectives: first, elicit a visceral response from the readership; and second, and construct a sense of ingroup (those supporting Nasser and the revolution) and an outgroup (the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist). By achieving their first goal, the state and its institutional agents create a persistent environment where Islamism and the Muslim Brotherhood are threats to both society and "smiling children."[202] The second solidifies a state-constructed idea of community or citizenry under the umbrella protection of the Egyptian State; this then requires the state to respond to aberrant and violent behavior that threatens the collective

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[199] Kenney, 98.

[200] Kenney, 99.

[201] Kenney, 99.

[202] Kenney, 99.

citizenry. By transgressing the purported norms of Islamic behavior, the government was required to take action to mitigate the activities of the Brotherhood. Said differently, under Weber's definition of a state and the normative judgment of al-Azhar, Nasser and the Egyptian government were permitted to legitimately use force to suppress the Brotherhood. The negative characterization of the Brotherhood in Egyptian publications effectively primed the Egyptian people to feel suspicious and wary of the group that would easily allow the allegory of the Kharijites to be invoked.

3. Arab Nationalism and the Modern Egyptian Citizenry

Thus far, we have seen that the use of the master Kharijite narrative by Nasser and official Islam in the mid-1960s served to minimize the Brotherhood's power and strengthen the Weberian legitimacy of the newly formed Egyptian nation-state. The terms use and religio-political stickiness reached its apex in modern Egypt's political discourse by the early 1970s and, to a limited degree, created the anti-model identity of the Kharijites in a highly harmful, essentialist, anti-state, and stability mold. However, the implications of the terms had far more profound consequences for social and political life within Egypt.

First, the outgroup characterization of the Kharijites lent Islamic credentials to the Arab Nationalism Nasser was pushing in Egypt. Kharijites were not only a theme of Islamic civilization but, rather, were the domestic incarnation of the evils that had plagued Egypt in the last two centuries. Imperialism, capitalism, Zionism, Marxism, and the Egyptian monarchy, along with Kharijism, were all masks worn by a single, evil actor attempting to prevent the independence, modernization, and prosperity of Egypt.[203] Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood, as cast in the role of modern or neo-Kharijites, was a domestic agent of the same conspiracy against modern Egypt, Nasser and his vision of a secular Arab state. However, by associating the phenomenon of the neo-Kharijite Brotherhood with modern concepts such as Imperialism and Zionism, the collective identity of the grouping imbued the regime of the Free Officers with religious, secular, and political legitimacy required to rule Modern Egypt. Said differently, the Islamic nature of the term Kharijite and the prescriptive action to be taken against those deemed Kharijites—a remedy of death and

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[203] Kenney, chap. 4.

elimination derived from the Quran, Hadith, and codified by medieval Islamic scholars—gave Nasser the "legitimacy" referred to in Weber's definition of a state.

Second, the identity of Egyptians as both Muslims and citizens of a nation-state was framed in the same manner in which medieval Islamic scholars framed Kharijites in the first few centuries of Islam: those who rebelled against the rightful leaders and those who obeyed; injecting this Islamic allegory gave Nasser and his regime the support of the established religious class and those Egyptians who view the world through the Islamic idiom. Throughout the 1960s and 70s, the scholars of al-Azhar continued the role of their medieval counterparts by injecting religious verse into the politicking of the modern state, often citing "that a Muslim is in compliance with his religion and nationality unless he rebels against the community, or he cooperates with the enemies of Islam and the homeland, or he commits crimes against anyone whether Muslim or not."[204] In this case, Nasser is cast as the Caliph 'Ali and the Muslim Brotherhood as the Kharijites of old. In the same casting, Egyptian citizens and good Muslims needed to accept Nasser as Egypt's rightful ruler. The revolution of the Free Officers, with the blessing of al-Azhar, is more similar than not to medieval scholars conferring political and religious legitimacy on the upstart Abbasid Caliphate.

Though the use of the Kharijite narrative in modern Egypt was widespread during the regimes of the Free Officers, the Egyptian state forced the narrative upon an ill-fitting and outdated, classical model that disguised the social, economic, and political woes underpinning modern Egypt. In framing the Brotherhood into a simplistic, essentialist, and characteristically binary framework, the Egyptian state failed to understand and address the systemic issues that were perpetually destabilizing and driving Egyptian youth toward the Muslim Brotherhood and far more violent groups. Under future Egyptian regimes, the complexity of factors contributing to violent extremism and political instability would become more commonplace; a more nuanced perspective concerning Islamism, Kharijism, and the government's failure to address the root problems that caused such extremism in religion would dominate the discourse.

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[204] Kenney, 116.

G. THE ERA OF SADAT AND MUBARAK: REFLECTION AND CHANGING THOUGHT

The use of the term Kharijite in the 1950s and 60s represented a state-controlled, one-sided argument that delegitimized both violent and non-violent Islamist groups and credentialed state authorities with a mélange of Islamic and Weberian legitimacy; however, the presidencies of Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak were marked by the relative expansion of Egyptian civil society, a loosening of government control on religious and public institutions, and a rapprochement with Islamism and the Muslim Brotherhood. Though the use of Kharijism by the government against those perceived as destabilizing the progression of Egypt continued, often violently, through to the 2000s, the government's relaxed grip on economic, religious, and social discourse provided an opening for greater understanding of violent Islamism and the societal conditions leading to its propagation. The opening also permitted a realignment and partitioning of Islamist groups, notably concerning a group's advocacy of violence to achieve its goals, creating space for a politically acceptable Islamist opposition.[205] While this period represents a continuity of the sinusoidal nature in the state's approach toward Islamists—ranging from marginal acceptance to violent repression—the shibboleth of Kharijism in its modern incantation evolved beyond the simplistic discourse of the 1960s and 70s. The complexity and depth of understanding concerning the charge of neo-Kharijite evolved into a far more complex discourse concerning the failures of the state to provide public goods, the "boundaries of Islamist opposition [,] and the nature of the Islamic polity."[206] However, the employment of the term by Sadat and Mubarak continued in much the same way as under Nasser, but in a targeted way that sanctioned the legitimate use of violence against outgroups charged as being Kharijites.

When the generally unknown Anwar Sadat became President in 1970, he inherited an Egypt reeling from a catastrophic war loss that had sent the country into a cultural, social, and economic spiral. The dramatic loss suffered by Egypt and Arab nationalism at the hands of Israel in the June 1967 War had far-reaching implications for the Egyptian

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[205] Kenney, chap. 4.

[206] Kenney, 117.

state and the system it advanced.[207] To ameliorate the discord and chaos of the war's aftermath, Nasser and later Sadat, embraced the Islamist forces they had once oppressed.[208]

Only a year into his presidency, Sadat put forth a series of reforms to correct deficiencies in Nasser's revolution. He purged Nasser loyalists from the political ranks, released jailed members of the Muslim Brotherhood, and other groups deemed political opponents of Nasser; Sadat saw the Brotherhood as victims of "corrupt government officials."[209] Though seemingly sympathetic to the plight of the Brotherhood, Sadat saw the Islamist movement as an avenue to balance the political forces of his regime and increase his base as the "believing president."[210] However, unbeknownst to Sadat and his government, the Islamist movement of the Muslim Brotherhood was no longer a single movement—if it ever was; rather it was a smattering of Islamist groups ranging from the reformist Brothers to the violent, revisionists of Takfir wal-Hijra, Jama'at Islamia, and Islamic Jihad.

The Islamist factions that emerged following the relaxation of political controls under Sadat fell into one of two camps: one which followed the reformist and moderate ideology of Hasan Isma'il al-Hudaybi; and the other adherents to the Qutbian-based ideology of violent Jihad. Though al-Hudaybi's writings and the so-called prison debates of the 1960s and 70s will be discussed at length in the next chapter—notably for al-Hudaybi's and other non-state actors adoption of the use of the term Kharijite as a rhetorical and somewhat moderating device—a summary of the primary division between the groups is warranted.[211] Most Islamists groups held that Egypt was in a state of *jahiliyya*; however, both camps advocated radically different remedies to this issue: peaceful activism or violent Jihad. This fundamental difference solidified the divide between the various

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[207] Dina Al Raffie, "Extremism in Moderation: Understanding State Responses to Terrorism in Egypt," in *Extremism in Moderation: Understanding State Responses to Terrorism in Egypt* (Manchester University Press, 2020), 309.

[208] Raffie, *Extremism in Moderation,* 309.

[209] Anwar Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 210.

[210] Raffie *Extremism in Moderation,* 124.

[211] Kenney, Muslim Rebels, chap. 5.

factions and came to define acceptable Islamist opposition of al-Hudaybi in the eyes of Sadat and Mubarak's government.[212]

Al-Hudaybi and his moderate, reformist Muslim Brotherhood staked a position between that of the Egyptian state and groups like Takfir. The middle-of-the-road approach of the Muslim Brotherhood in the mid-1970s avoided the views which garnered its oppression under Nasser and thus, allowed limited political representation and the rejoinder of Islamism into the political discourse of Egypt.[213] By recognizing the regime of Sadat as legitimate and those wishing to overthrow it as anti-state, heretical rebels, the Muslim Brotherhood positioned itself between groups like Takfir and the government. However, within the binary debate of Kharijism, the Brothers temporarily sided with the state. This pseudo-grey area of existence allowed the Brotherhood and other Islamist organizations to capitalize on the destructive outcomes of Sadat's economic liberalization. Sadat's "open-door" economic policy significantly reduced the social safety provisions the state had previously provided; the Brotherhood stepped in throughout the 1970s and beyond to provide public goods, utilities, and services.[214] As state by Dinna al Raffie, "as long as the activism was restricted to the areas in which they operated and did not cross the threshold of violence against the state and its interests," the existence and operations of Islamist groups were tolerated.[215]

1.   Kharijite Redux

By including moderate Islamists within the construct of the Egyptian state, Sadat believed that the deliberative political process he was creating through relaxation and liberalization would have a moderating effect on all like-groups.[216] While this was true for a fraction of Islamist organizations who promoted acceptable opposition in the state's eyes, the anti-secular, anti-state principles and violent tendencies of many Islamist groups

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[212] Kenney, 125.

[213] Kenney, chaps. 4–5.

[214] Raffie, *Extremism in Moderation*, 310.

[215] Raffie, 310.

[216] Raffie, 311.

continued throughout Sadat and Mubarak's presidencies. Moreover, the epithet of Kharijite, beyond the discourse of Nasser and its later moderating employment by Hudaybi, remained the religiously legitimizing force permitting the Egyptian government to perpetrate violence against outgroups deemed Kharijites by the state, official Islam, and now, moderate Islamist groups.

The terrorist and violent Islamist organizations of the Mubarak and Sadat eras—notably dominated by the Technical Military Academy group (*Jama'at al-Fanniya al-'Askariya*), the Excommunication and Emigration group (Takfir), the Jihad organization, and Jund Allah—behaved in a manner more consistent with the original Kharijites. While they exhibited minor differences in doctrine, the act of takfir (declaring a Muslim an unbeliever), the belief in contemporary *jahiliyya*, and the use of force to overthrow leaders considered un-Islamic garnered the groups a monolithic character with little distinction or separation. However, no group encapsulated the ideation of neo-Kharijite as dramatically as Takfir.

The Takfir group emerged from the prison debates of the 1960s as one of the many radical Islamist factions that splintered from the Muslim Brotherhood. Shukri Mustafa, the founder of Takfir, advocated that faithful adherents to Islam were required to physically separate themselves from *jahiliyya* society and based such a requirement on Muhammed's *hijra* (emigration) from Mecca to Medina. By doing so, members would be untainted by the shirk and sin of *jahiliyya* society; those who chose not to emigrate were declared unbelievers and subject to retribution.[217] In 1973, Mustafa and his fellow Takfir members left for a secluded region outside of Minya, Egypt, in order to create the abode of Islam separate from the rest of *jahiliyya* society.[218] After repeated clashes with authorities near Minya and elsewhere, its members were arrested and later imprisoned. Coupled with the actions of the Technical Military Academy group, which attempted to infiltrate the Military Academy and bring down the regime of Sadat and the assassination of Husayn al-Dahaybi,

217 Hamid Hassan et al*., Muwajahat al-fikr al-mutatarrif fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Matba'a al-Gabalawi, 1980), 19–22. Cited in Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 126.

218 Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 126.

Takfir garnered a strong rebuke from the clerics of al-Azhar and a harsh clampdown by the state[219]…a cycle that would repeat itself to varying degrees to present day.

The response of the state and official Islam to Takfir is best exemplified in publications like *Firebrands from the Divine Guidance of Islam* and *Deviant Trends in the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, two Azhari essays that attempted to refute violent Islamist actions which were viewed as destabilizing to Islamic society and the state.[220] Different from the Nasser era, al-Azhar of the Sadat and Mubarak era displayed "a degree of independent religious thinking."[221] Sadat's deregulation of al-Azhar altered how the scholars of al-Azhar discussed the charge of Kharijism; acts of the Kharijites—religiously motivated violence, assassinations, and *takfir*—were not merely affronts to the nation-state, but attacks on the Islamic moral order. Modern Kharijites were "traitors to Islam and Muslim society," not the modern Egyptian state.[222] Though distinct from the pronouncements of Kharijism from the Nasser era, the lines between state and religious institutions and outlets blurred the moral and civic objections to the Kharijites, who often used the terms criminal, terrorist, and Kharijite interchangeably.[223] Though state control over religious institutions and official Islam was less than under Nasser, religious denunciation and the invocation of the Master Kharijite narrative, by its very nature, takes a side. In the early years of Islam, the designation of Kharijite relegated a group or individual as an enemy of the state and Islam. Thus, the master Kharijite narrative invoked by al-Azhar necessitated state action against Takfir and other groups in the late 1970s.

Sadat's condemnation and subsequent crackdown on Islamist groups like Takfir continued the cyclical pattern of Islamism's relationship with official Islam and state authorities. This pattern of repression and rapprochement percolated through the remainder of Sadat's tenure and throughout Mubarak's presidency. Sadat's assassination in 1981 at

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[219] Kenney, 126.

[220] Kenney, 127.

[221] al-Ahram, 8 July 1977, Ruz al-Yusuf, 29 August 1977; October, 28 August. Cited in Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 131.

[222] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 131.

[223] Kenney, 131.

the hands of the Jihad Organization marked another episode in the cycle (or recycle) of the Kharijites and the state, prompting further crackdowns and the marshaling of the Islamic idiom to reinforce the legitimacy of the power of the state and monopolize violence within the bounds of Egypt.[224] Though the official line from the state and al-Azhar may have pushed the same Kharijite narrative, the Egyptian peoples' understanding and response to Islamic extremism evolved based on an understanding of contemporary Egyptian society and greater knowledge of violent extremism. As Kenney notes:

> This shift in anti-extremist politics was brought about by historical experience and self-criticism, the culmination of a learning process in which Egyptians came to realize that state authoritarianism and Islamist violence were intertwined elements of the same political culture and that social and economic problems contributed directly to the extremist trend.[225]

The repeated recollection of the Kharijite narrative failed to blunt Islamist violence and rebellion against the Egyptian state. Hosni Mubarak, like Sadat and Nasser, confronted re-imagined Islamist groups that followed in the image of the extremist elements of the Muslim Brotherhood, Takfir wal-Hijra, and the Jihad Organizations and again, like his predecessors, continued to use the image of the Kharijites as justification for the use of violence against such groups.[226]

Additionally, moderate Islamist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood's reformed faction, had infiltrated Egyptian society, providing state functions and services where the state could not, and oftentimes, refused to make good on the promises of a modernized Egypt. Aware of previous experiences with extremism and modernizations, the Egyptian people viewed the neo-Kharijites of the 1990s and early 2000s as symptoms of a larger subset of problems: the haphazard formation of the modern nation-state; the stagnation of the Egyptian economy; the lack of opportunity promised by the revolution and its subsequent regimes; and the dearth of political legitimacy, popular or otherwise, which the government claimed. The Free Officers' continued invocation of the Kharijite narrative epitomized the failures of the Egyptian regime to consolidate an ideology or

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224 Kenney, 140.

225 Kenney, 148.

226 Kenney, 145.

political legitimacy, opting rather to contrive its legitimacy through an Islamic allegory—a concept antithetical to the secular regime who wielded such a device. Such contradictions and failures of the state ultimately contributed to the growing call for popular determination and the events of the 2011 Arab Spring.

H. CONCLUSION: THE ARAB SPRING, THE REGIME OF AL-SISI AND THE RE-EMERGENCE OF THE NEO-KHARIJITES

The promise of democracy and political change in Egypt following the 2011 Arab Spring uprising ushered in an age in which the popular and political legitimacy sought by the regimes of Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak was finally at hand, but wielding such legitimacy would be the Muslim Brotherhood under the Freedom and Justice Party. The neo-Kharijites of the twentieth century were now the arbiters of state authority, with the popular backing to execute their Islamist vision of Egypt; however, this was not to be. After a short tenure, "popular forces" backed by the deep state ousted democratically elected Mohammed Morsi as President in a coup d'état, installing General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi as President.[227] Not long after coming to power, the specter of Kharijism re-emerged after its dormancy following the 2011 Arab Spring. The Muslim Brotherhood was banned from the Egyptian political scene and labeled as a terrorist organization, earning the tried-and-true title of Kharijites.[228]

The resurgent image of the Muslim Brotherhood as neo-Kharijites has only escalated with the rise of the Islamic State, with the Egyptian state, al-Azhar, and media outlets conflating the Muslim Brotherhood with the likes of the Islamic State.[229] The oversimplification and binary characterization of Islamist movements ranging from the Brotherhood to the Islamic State—under the guise of Kharijism—is not a new anti-terrorism policy of Sisi's regime; rather, as this chapter has argued, the themes of the master

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[227] David D. Kirkpatrick, "Army Ousts Egypt's President; Morsi Is Taken Into Military Custody (Published 2013)," *The New York Times*, July 3, 2013, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/04/world/middleeast/egypt.html.

[228] Jeffrey Kenney, "Sectarian Politics and Weak States in the Middle East: The Return of the Khawarij in Egypt," *Maydan* (blog), October 8, 2016, https://themaydan.com/2016/10/sectarian-politics-and-weak-states-in-the-middle-east-the-return-of-the-khawarij-in-egypt/.

[229] Kenney, "Sectarian Politics and Weak States in the Middle East."

Kharijite narrative are cyclical, selectively recall the Islamic idiom to imbue the revolutionary regime with Islamic legitimacy and suppress Islamist groups using violent methods. Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic State are again cast in the same mold of the Kharijites and are dealt with in the fashion as 'Ali, the Umayyads, and the Abbasids. In the case of the Brotherhood and al-Sisi, the re-emergence of the Kharijite narrative is indicative of a weak state in search of a legitimizing ideology.

This tendency is not limited to Egypt; rather, it pervades the gamut of Middle Eastern and Islamic nations that recall the well-worn symbols and language of the Kharijite narrative to induce a robust state response to violent Islamists and a widespread rebuke of behavior deemed Islamically unacceptable. Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, Morocco, and many others have used Kharijism to elicit what Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak had attempted; however, to date, the term masks deeper societal and religious issues that have been inadequately addressed by the ruling authorities.

IV. NON-STATE ACTORS

In much the same way that Egypt used the Kharijite epithet to gain political and religious legitimacy, non-state Islamist groups cast the Kharijite charge and, to an extent, the master narrative in their effort to delegitimize adversaries and opposing groups. Though the use of the term Kharijite by both state and non-state actors is similar, two factors distinguish the impact of the term's use: the user's identity and the context in which it is employed. When considering both factors, the outcome of using the term varies only slightly based on the context; it remains that the group invoking the charge of Kharijism and the master narrative intend to characterize their existence and interests as religiously and politically legitimate. When invoked by Islamists groups operating within the political bounds of the modern state, Islamists using the term establish themselves as religiously and politically palatable or acceptable, often demonizing their more extreme Islamist cousins as Kharijites and reinforcing the state's claims of legitimacy and use of violent force against out-group Islamists. When used by Islamist groups that operate outside of a normalized state context, accusing opponents of being a Kharijite operates similarly with more religious overtones: it marks the group as the sole champion of true Islam, deeming all others as heterodox and unbelievers. Though the lack of a state alters the extent and overall utility of the term Kharijite due to the argued original purpose of the master narrative, the use of the term Kharijite by Islamist groups demonstrates the power of the Islamic idiom and the use of well-worn and weaponized narratives to bestow political and religious validity.

This chapter will explore the writings of two notable Islamists who invoke the Kharijite narrative—Hasan Isma'il al-Hudaybi of the Muslim Brotherhood and Qatar-based Yusuf al-Qaradawi—followed by an accounting of notable instances in which Islamist organizations wielded the charge of Kharijism against other Islamists.

A. KHARIJITES AMONG US: HASAN ISMA'IL AL-HUDAYBI AND THE REFORMED BROTHERHOOD

As covered in the previous chapter, Kharijism and the political and religious discourse surrounding Islamist movements and their relationship vis-à-vis the state figured prominently, if not centrally, in Egypt after the revolution of the Free Officers in 1952. Among the many political, social, and religious dialogues that occurred in the formative phases of modern Egypt, the prison debates—a phenomenon characterized by dialogue between a spectrum of moderate and hardline imprisoned Islamists concerning the future of the Brotherhood[230]—generated numerous treatises and manifestos. The prison debates and the fissures exposed by ideological opponents demonstrated the emerging heterogeneous composition of the Islamist movement.[231] Though Sayyid Qutb emerged as the most prominent of the prison authors, notably for his extremist tendencies and mujahid tone, Hasan Isma'il al-Hudaybi, the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood following the death of Hassan al-Banna, represented the moderate incarnation of the Muslim Brotherhood, one that promoted working within the construct of the state to advance the causes of Islam and the Brotherhood. Al-Hudaybi's vision, in contrast with that of Qutb and other radicals, eschewed the exclusivist, austere, and often extremist interpretation of Islam offered by the more radical members of the Brotherhood that initially garnered the group the title of Neo-Kharijite.[232] Rather, al-Hudaybi offered a pluralistic and reformist rebuke of Qutb's manifesto by casting Qutb and the extremist Islamist movement in the role of the Kharijites. This is remarkable as al-Hudaybi and his fellow brothers had been deemed neo-Kharijites by the state just over a decade earlier.

Al-Hudaybi's seminal work, *Preachers…Not Judges*, was the first in a series of moderate Islamist literature that advanced the reformist principles by countering the foundation of Qutb's writings and invoking the master Kharijite narrative. Though al-Hudaybi does not directly apply the label of Kharijite to Qutb—Qutb remained a revered

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[230] Barbara Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan Al-Hudaybi and Ideology* (London, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), chap. 2.

[231] Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood,* chap. 2.

[232] Zollner, chap. 3; Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 122–23.

figure within the Brotherhood after his execution—the parallels drawn by Hudaybi are unmistakable.[233] Since joining the Brotherhood in 1947, Al-Hudaybi was exceedingly aware of the moderate-extremist tensions within the Brotherhood. As Supreme Guide, he was unable to reconcile the desires of the more militant members, many of whom were members of the Secret Apparatus, with those of the moderates; the failure at reconciliation to do so fostered an environment in which the 1954 assassination attempt on Nasser and the conspiracy of 1965 effectively eliminated the Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Hudaybi as political and religious actors. Furthermore, the subsequent charge of Kharijism leveled against the Brotherhood for their violent tendencies, in Al-Hudaybi's opinion, threatened to derail the Islamist agenda and malign the movement overall.[234] Under these circumstances, Al-Hudaybi attempted to set a new direction for the Brotherhood; his apologia recycled the Kharijite narrative to place most of the moderate Brotherhood within the norms of modern Egypt and condemned the radical factions of the Brotherhood as neo-Kharijites. Al-Hudaybi frames his thesis in his title; the Muslim Brotherhood should advocate and advance Islam, rather than exact judgment against those deemed unbelievers, heterodox, or polytheists…for anyone who utters the confession is "consider [ed] a Muslim…and [the Brotherhood] has no right to examine the extent of the truthfulness of his confession."[235] Al-Hudaybi also rebutted a foundational tenet of Qutb's thesis by defining *jahiliyya* as a historical age rather than a condition in which humans do not adhere to proper Islamic behavior and belief.[236]

Al-Hudaybi warned against judging the sins of others, and particularly, the sins of a leader viewed as un-Islamic, stating that any violent action taken against the leader usurped the judgment of God and amounted to internal discord.[237] Muslims who judged

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233 Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 67.

234 Zollner, 65.

235 Hasan Isma'il al-Hudaybi, *Du'ah...la qudah (Preachers...Not Judges)* (Cairo: Dar al-Tiba'a wa'l-Nashr al-Islamiyya, 1977), 14; Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 122.

236 Hasan Isma'il al-Hudaybi, Du'ah...la qudah (Preachers...Not Judges), 19; Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, chap. 3.

237 Hasan Isma'il al-Hudaybi, Du'ah...la qudah (Preachers...Not Judges), 21–22; Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood,* chap. 3.

the since of others on earth and acted to enact punishment for those sins—usually in the form of targeted killings—were considered Kharijites and unworthy of membership in Islamic society, the Brotherhood, and the functions of the state. Providing a contrasting definition of Islamic belief, *jahiliyya*, and judgment of sin, Al-Hudaybi cast extremist and violent Islamists as Kharijites.

Though *Preachers* is primarily focused on the religious aspect of the proper conduct of Muslims and members of the Brotherhood at large, the impetus behind Al-Hudaybi's challenge to Qutb is squarely based in the realm of the political.[238] Al-Hudaybi viscerally understood the power the state wielded when invoking Islamic cultural narratives, particularly the heresiographical polemics of the master Kharijite narrative, against the Muslim Brotherhood and the burgeoning Islamist movement.[239] To achieve a future for Egypt remotely akin to the vision of many Islamists, Al-Hudaybi offered a reformist narrative to the Islamist agenda and demonized the violent wing of the Brotherhood as neo-Kharijites. In doing so, he placed the moderate Islamists squarely within the state's camp, siding with Nasser and the Caliph 'Ali and opposing the rebellious factions that attempted to tear the fabric of Egyptian society apart, just as the early Kharijites threatened early Islamic society. Al-Hudaybi, through the imagery of the Kharijites, not only attempted to legitimize the positions of the modern Brothers but grounded their existence and survival as a group within the confines of acceptable Islamic behavior.[240] It telegraphed to the state that adherents to the moderate Islamist cause warranted inclusion within Egyptian society; Nasser and his successors were not labeled apostates, and in return, members of the Brotherhood who demonstrated peaceful opposition to the state should not be considered Kharijites and did not require the violent response of the state.[241] Thus, the reappropriation of the Kharijite shibboleth, Al-Hudaybi hoped, would ensure the future of the Muslim Brotherhood politically and permit the group to exist as loyal opposition to the Egyptian state. Al-Hudaybi's moderate manifesto

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[238] Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 64–65.

[239] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 122–24.

[240] Kenney, 122–26.

[241] Kenney, 124–26; Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 65–68.

signaled to Nasser's regime its willingness to operate within the construct of the modern Egyptian state set forth by the Free Officers.

While some of his fellow Brothers labeled *Preachers* as a complete concession to the state and an abandonment of the Brotherhood's ideals, by using the Kharijite narrative, Al-Hudaybi found ways to minimize his tacit support of all Al-Azhar and the state. By decrying all judgments of faith, al-Hudaybi also negated the favorable judgments issued by Al-Azhar in favor of the state.[242] In advising Brothers to avoid passing judgment upon leaders viewed as tyrants—disavowing the practice of *takfir* and the killing of said leaders—it appears al-Al-Hudaybi only buttresses the case of the state against the Brotherhood; however, al-Hudaybi cleverly notes that members of the Islamic community should defer judgment of those deemed to be devout and practicing Muslims.[243] Therefore, by suspending judgment of all persons or institutions in question, Al-Hudaybi cleverly invoked the Kharijite narrative to condemn both radical Islamists and the religious institutions that favored the state. In this way, al-Hudaybi attempts to neuter the state's ability to dominate the Islamic culture talk, and in rhetorical terms, effectively minimized the damage the state could inflict by using the narrative against the Brotherhood.

In what is arguably the first modern instance of an Islamist group invoking the Kharijite epithet against its perceived opponents, *Preachers* distills the Brotherhood's vision of an Islamic Egypt that accepts the existence of the modern Egyptian state and its leaders, all while challenging the authority of Nasser and al-Azhar in a religio-politically acceptable manner. The work demonstrates the realpolitik of its author, who strategically articulates a moderate message that operates within the state's construct and narratives. Al-Hudaybi's use of the Kharijite narrative demonstrated the multiplicity of its utility as a weapon of secular statists and Islamists alike.[244] As Al-Hudaybi surmised in *Preachers,* the religious idiom invoked by the state—that which invokes the Kharijite image—is

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[242] Hasan Isma'il al-Hudaybi, Du'ah...la qudah (Preachers...Not Judges), 162–64; Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 123.

[243] Hasan Isma'il al-Hudaybi, Du'ah...la qudah (Preachers...Not Judges); Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 123.

[244] Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 124.

plastic and bent to meet the desire of its molder.[245] Rather than allow the state to dominate the use of religious idioms and narratives, Al-Hudaybi manipulated the same devices to foster dialogue among the Muslim Brotherhood about the future of the Islamist movement within Egypt and partially subvert the twisting of the narrative by the state to further its own authority.[246] The charge of Kharijism thus represented a device of the Brotherhood to confer the self-identity of acceptable opposition and protest while simultaneously delegitimizing the absolute power of the state and the politically charged violence of extreme Islamists.

This instance of exploiting the narrative and charge of Kharijism describes Islamists who attempt to legitimize their existence within the bounds of a weak state seeking to consolidate its power. Similarly, the next section reviews Yusuf al-Qaradawi's work and the evolution of the Kharijite narrative as it pertains to modern Islamist movements and their fratricidal tendencies.

B.   AL-QARADAWI: THE CAUSES OF THE KHARIJITE CONDITION

In the case of al-Hudaybi and the Muslim Brotherhood, *Preachers* was written and interpreted in an Egyptian context; however, Hudaybi's thesis and advocacy for a reformed, non-violent Islamist movement can be applied to the broader Islamic context. The work of Yusuf al-Qaradawi recalls the imagery and narrative of the Kharijites in a comprehensive yet nuanced approach that addresses the causes of what Qaradawi views as neo-Kharijism. Qaradawi is the Islamist scholar who has championed and cultivated the *wasatiyya*, or "centrist" form of Islamism into a school of Islamic thought. Part of its foundation as a school of Islamic thought seeks to "disseminate…and to constitute an alternative to a 'juridical flaw' from which, in al-Qaradawi's opinion, the violent groups in Islam suffer."[247] An acolyte of both al-Azhar and the Muslim Brotherhood, Qaradawi's work *al-Sahwa al-islamiyya bain al-juhud wa'l-tatarruf* (Islamic Awakening Between

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245 Hasan Isma'il al-Hudaybi, *Du'ah...la qudah (Preachers...Not Judges)*; James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 102–3.

246 Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, 124.

247 Sagi Polka, *Shaykh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi: Spiritual Mentor of Wasati Salafism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2019), 2.

Rejection and Extremism) is not only a detailed analysis of the current of violence within Islamist movements but a prescient primer for the modern causes of fratricidal tendencies among Islamist factions.[248] While Qaradawi does not cast the aspersions against a specific group or movement, he invokes the Kharijite narrative to address what he views as the fundamental religious misunderstandings of violent Islamists that exhibit Kharijite-like behavior and the conditions—the social, economic, and political maladies of brought about by the secularly minded regimes of the Middle East—that nurture the extremism indicative of the neo-Kharijites.

Al-Qaradawi's scholastic and Islamist pedigrees—a graduate of al-Azhar and an active member of the Muslim Brotherhood—contribute to his moderate and meticulously crafted arguments against both violent Islamists and secular society. In his time in Egypt, al-Qaradawi was among the first graduates of al-Azhar to belong to both the Brotherhood and al-Azhar simultaneously;[249] however, unlike other scholars who shed either their Azharite or Brotherhood credentials in favor of the other, al-Qaradawi maintained identities of Azharite Islamic scholar and political Islamist.[250] He is noted for both extolling al-Azhar as "heirs of the prophets" and criticizing it for its role in legitimizing and executing the will of the Free Officers.[251] Similarly, he often criticized Islamist movements for transgressions against acceptable Islamic behavior yet sympathized with their plight; al-Qaradawi, as a member of the Brotherhood in mid-century Egypt, was subject to imprisonment and torture for his beliefs and association with the Brotherhood. Thus, the scholastic forges of al-Azhar provide Qaradawi with the Islamic credentials to be authoritative on religious matters and the Brotherhood's tribulations under the Egyptian Crown and Nasser with the perspective of the lay Muslim. Such a combination, in conjunction with his prominence, platform, and the popularity of his message gives him the qualifications to invoke the Kharijite narrative to condemn violent tendencies of some

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248 Hafez, "Not My Brother's Keeper," 201.

249 Polka, *Shaykh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi*, 103.

250 Polka, 104–7.

251 Polka, 104–7.

Islamists while castigating secular society and authoritarian states for creating the conditions that foster neo-Kharijites.[252]

In *Islamic Awakening,* Qaradawi juxtaposes the Kharijites of antiquity against the religious extremists of his time to deconstruct their misuse and perversion of Prophetic verse while simultaneously identifying the failings of modern, secular society as the culprit of their religious dereliction. Al-Qaradawi places Takfir wal-Hijra and other violent Islamists rhetorically adjacent to the original Kharijites without directly naming them as such; however, his understanding of the conditions that nurture religious extremism and violence is evident:

> What we actually need is the unflinching courage to admit that our youth have been forced to resort to what we call "religious extremism" through our own misdeeds ... in order to rectify this situation, we need to begin by reforming ourselves and our societies according to Allah's decree before we can ask our youth to be calm, to show wisdom and temperance.[253]

With the specter of Kharijism raised, Qaradawi describes the cause of the extremists' errors. He attributes Islamist violence to the lack of religious knowledge of the populous. Of the many misinterpretations and mistakes he identifies, Qaradawi focuses on radical Islamists' puritanical claims to be the sole arbiters of the Islamic faith, belief, and jurisprudence. As Hafez identifies, Qaradawi "asserts that there are two types of religious disagreements in Islam"; one concerning proper creed, and the other concerning jurisprudence.[254] Such disagreements surround creed are impermissible, often resulting in the tumult that divides and fragments the Islamic community.[255] The latter disagreement, that concerning jurisprudence, is one that is desired and "evidence of God's generosity that He permits believers to choose between different interpretations of scripture based on their circumstances."[256] Thus, Qaradawi elevates the diversity of interpretive jurisprudence so

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[252] Polka, chap. 3. Al-Qaradawi has a popular Al Jazeera program *Sharia and Life* has 700–800 million viewers worldwide.

[253] Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Islamic Awakening: Between Rejection and Extremism* (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2006), 17, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvkc67k3.

[254] al-Qaradawi, *Islamic Awakening*; cited in Hafez, "Not My Brother's Keeper," 203.

[255] al-Qaradawi, *Islamic Awakening*; cited in Hafez, "Not My Brother's Keeper," 203.

[256] Hafez, "Not My Brother's Keeper," 203.

scorned by extremists; the rigid, single-track, and puritanical interpretation of scripture by those he compares to the Kharijites of antiquity fail to wholly understand the plural interpretive structure—based on an undisputed creed—which God bestowed upon man. Though Qaradawi finds the particulars of the faith as sources of extremist behavior, he argues that cultural tensions and hollow Islamic societies are the systemic roots of extremism.

Qaradawi elucidates Western society's corrupting power and culture upon Islamic society, emphasizing the failure of the Islamic polity to defend against such encroachment. His qualm with Western and secular culture lies in its opposition to the structure and balance that the totality of the Islamic system had offered. The lack of the Islamic system and the outright suppression of Islam under the secular regimes of the Baath and Nasser had exposed Muslims to a whole host of visceral and lascivious phenomenon: loose women, the consumption of alcohol, political corruption, rampant economic inequality, foreign ideologies, the rise of the Zionist state, the humiliation of Muslims, and the undermining of the rights of Palestine.[257] Islamic morality, he argues, provides an avenue to mitigate the contemporary tribulations and vice that confront Muslims daily; however, the active suppression of Islamic identity and Muslim activism "cannot be suppressed forever, and must eventually explode."[258] Such an explosion manifests itself in the form of Kharijite behavior, and as Qaradawi sympathizes, it is understandable why Islamists choose "to meet force with force and violence with violence."[259] In this way, Qaradawi invokes the taboo meme of the Kharijites in a way that attempts to explain the puzzle of the radical Islamist problem. Within the context of late twentieth-century Egypt, Qaradawi's nuance in analyzing the neo-Kharijite condition surpasses earlier attempts to wield the Kharijite epithet and justify its use through oversimplified mechanisms. Moreover, Qaradawi's use of the term, thus far, goes beyond the invocation of the Kharijite narrative in previous cases and chapters; rather than invoking the façade of Kharijism as a negative shibboleth to demonize Islamists advocating violence in the name of Islam, he

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257 al-Qaradawi, *Islamic Awakening*, 83–89.

258 al-Qaradawi, 88.

259 al-Qaradawi, 90–95.

frames the social and political dialogue concerning contemporary struggles of society within an Islamic context. Instead of merely co-opting the image of the Kharijites to legitimize the moderate Islamists, as Hudaybi did, Qaradawi uses the narrative to address the deep and systemic causes of violent Islamist tendencies.

In concluding his use of the Kharijite narrative, Qaradawi invokes the well-worn and potent allegory of the original Kharijite sin—the secession of the Kharijites from 'Ali's camp at Siffin—not to further condemn Islamists who have resorted to violence but to encourage Muslims to approach the issue of Islamic extremism thoughtfully.[260] In this new twist of the tale, Qaradawi encourages Muslims to act as 'Ali did toward the Kharijites: do not cast them out or deem them brothers in Islam and only use force against them as a final resort.[261] The importance of this allusion to the Battle of Siffin in such a context cannot be understated. The allegory of 'Ali and the Kharijites has been wielded as a weapon against those seeking to overthrow the rightful leader; from medieval scholars such as Shahrastani to President Sisi of Egypt. Qaradawi de-weaponizes the allegory and puts forth a different interpretation to force the discourse around Islamic extremism in a direction that addressed its purported root causes and proposed an Islamist solution. His solution, however, is a version of a moderate and reformed Islamism, one that sees Islam as the governing structure of the modern states of the Middle East. In this way, Qaradawi utilizes the Kharijite narrative to legitimize his vision for modern Islamic societies and states; only by raising peaceful opposition that promotes Islam's reestablishment as the totality of the governing system and power structure can the woes of contemporary Islamic society be ameliorated. In this way, Qaradawi's use of the Battle of Siffin is akin to those who have used it before him: a tool in which a familiar narrative communicates legitimacy and advances a cause or agenda.

Aside from Qaradawi's use of the Kharijite imagery in *Islamic Awakening* to elucidate a softer and more introspective view of Islamic extremism, his work presages the division and fratricidal tendencies of modern-day Islamist groups. As Hafez notes, the book

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[260] al-Qaradawi, 109–11.

[261] al-Qaradawi, 109–11.

is significant as it "anticipates many of the issues that have divided Islamists on the battlefield in Algeria, Iraq, and Syria from the 1990s to the present time."[262] Qaradawi's prescient words regarding Islamist infighting serves as an excellent primer to analyze the use of the Kharijite narrative and imagery by contemporary Islamist groups, particularly the Islamic State.

C.   THE ISLAMIC STATE, INFIGHTING AND THE NEO-KHARIJITES: BRANDING THE ENEMY

As discussed previously, al-Qaradawi posits that it is permissible within the Islamic community to disagree on juridical matters concerning religious rulings and readings of scripture based on the specific context and conditions. Nevertheless, disagreement on the foundations of the Islamic creed is impermissible.[263] Islamist organizations, ranging from the Armed Islamic Group and Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria to the Islamic State and al-Nusra in Syria, disagree on matters of Islamic politics and jurisprudence, often turning their weapons and excoriating rhetoric against each other, even when confronted with a shared foe, usually a state or foreign power.[264] Among the epithets and deleterious narratives intended to harm rival groups and legitimize the cause of their own faction, the narrative of Kharijism figures centrally in the religiously charged rhetoric. The permissible and beneficial disagreement by Islamist factions over matters such as *takfir*, in al-Qaradawi's view, unfortunately, devolves into internal discord within the Islamic community or fitna, so well described by Qaradawi:

> One is perplexed and pained to no end when he finds some of those who work for Islam accuse others of being traitorous agents who are chasing after secularists and the enemies of Islam. They say about others: "He is an agent of the West or East, or to this or that regime," simply because he disagrees with their opinions or some stance, or because he adopts means that differ from theirs.[265]

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262 Hafez, "Not My Brother's Keeper," 201.

263 al-Qaradawi, *Islamic Awakening*, 110; cited in Hafez, "Not My Brother's Keeper," 202–203.

264 For a detailed look at this phenomenon, see Hafez's *Fratricidal Rebels: Ideological Extremity and Warring Factionalism in Civil Wars.*

265 al-Qaradawi, *Islamic Awakening*; cited in Hafez, "Not My Brother's Keeper," 204.

The discord Qaradawi depicted hauntingly resembles that occurred during the Syrian Civil War and the rise and fall of the Islamic State; the religious and political disagreements between members of the Islamic State and between the Islamic State and other Islamists groups such as al-Qaeda and al-Nusra often devolved into religious rhetorical fights in which the Kharijite narrative is invoked and wielded against the opposing Islamist faction.

This section analyzes the juridic disagreements within the Islamic state, the disagreements between the Islamic State and rival Islamist factions, and how the master Kharijite narrative served as the primary rhetorical weapon to legitimize its user's religious and political stance and demonize its opposition. Though this is not the only instance in which Salafi Jihadists or violent Islamists have delved into the rhetorical quiver of the Islamic lexicon to loose the curse of Kharijite, its use by and against the Islamic State is the most contemporary and well-documented example in which the Kharijite narrative was employed by those seeking to exploit the terms political and religious power. Furthermore, the charge of Kharijite, the Islamic infighting against rival factions, and the level of religiously motivated violence carried out by the Islamic State are arguably most identifiable with the Kharijites (and more specifically, the Azariqa) of antiquity.

From the Grand Nuri Mosque in Mosul, Iraq, on June 29th, 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared the foundation of a Caliphate from Western Syria to Northeastern Iraq. Resurrecting the caliphate after 90 years of suspense,[266] Baghdadi and his cohort established a state based on the totality of Islam as its foundation. The Islamic State group initially emerged in 2004 as an offshoot of the tattered al-Qaeda of Iraq by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.[267] Over the next decade, its form and success oscillated until it emerged as a robust entity in the early 2010s. Capitalizing on the instability of sectarian strike in Iraq and the burgeoning civil war in Syria, the Islamic State expanded its caliphate to encompass vast swaths of Iraq and Syria, including Mosul, Iraq; however, the caliphate's existence would prove ephemeral. By 2018, the Islamic State had lost much of its territory, and in

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[266] Mustafa Kemal Attaturk abolished the caliphate on March 3rd, 1924.

[267] "Timeline: *The Rise, Spread, and Fall of the Islamic State* | Wilson Center," 1, accessed January 14, 2021, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state.

2019, its leader, al-Baghdadi, was killed by a U.S. strike.[268] Nevertheless, the numerous offshoots of the Islamic State and the attractiveness of its ideology for Salafi Jihadists remains very much alive.

The Islamic State's ideology—an extreme Islamist dogma "representative of authentic Islam as practiced by the early generations of Muslims [that] draws on a stringent brand of Salafism" known as Wahabism—has maintained its salience among its affiliates as well as its current and former members;[269] however, disagreements concerning juridic matters, mainly over the practice of *takfir*, have caused infighting among ideological bedfellows, often resulting in violent disagreement.

Within the Islamic State, two periods of disagreement regarding *takfir*—one in 2014 and one in 2016—were marked by infighting and the use of the Kharijite curse. The case surrounding the use of the Kharijite epithet in 2014 revolves around Islamic State member Abu Ja'far al-Hattab and the concept of *takfir al-'adhir* or the excommunication of the excuser.[270] *Takfir al-'adhir* is a concept made prominent by 'Umar al-Hazimi, a Saudi cleric, in which someone is declared an unbeliever due to their excuse of "a person's unbelief or polytheism on the grounds that the person is ignorant of the fact that he or she is committing unbelief or polytheism."[271] Acolytes of al-Hazimi within the Islamic state, known as the Hazimis, were led by al-Hattab, a member of the Sharia committee in the Islamic State. Al-Hattaba and the Hazimis found ideological opponents of *takfir al-'adhir* in Turki al-Bin'ali and Abu Sulayman al-Shami, who denounced the practice as too extreme.[272] Both al-Bin'ali and al-Shami authored scathing rebukes of *takfir al-'adhir* in Islamic state publications and on social media, denouncing the practice as an innovation and a dangerous opening to "*takfir* in infinite regress, or an endless chain of *takfir*."[273] Such

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268 "Timeline."

269 Hassan Hassan, "The Sectarianism of the Islamic State: Ideological Roots and Political Context," n.d., accessed January 14, 2021.

270 Cole Bunzel, "Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 13, no. 1 (2019): 14–15.

271 Bunzel, 1"Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State," 4.

272 Bunzel, 15.

273 Bunzel, 15–17.

a practice would result in an endless cycle of declaring any and all members of the Islamic community as unbelievers, hampering the cause and efforts of the Islamic State and thusly was seen as a potentially existential challenge to the longevity of the Islamic State's ideology. Al-Hattab and the Hazimis were arrested and executed in the autumn of 2014 and declared as Kharijites by numerous committees and publications of the Islamic State, including the General Committee—the pre-2015 executive body of the group—and the Islamic State's magazine *Dabiq*.[274] Leaked documents from the Islamic State's General Security Department indicate that the Hazimis represented "the danger of the extremists" and discussed the execution of the neo-Kharijites as a step to eliminating radical rebels within the ranks of the Islamic State.[275] Though the purported Kharijites had been expunged from the community, the specter of the Kharijite threat persisted.

The issue of *takfir* continued to divide members of the Islamic State, causing years of debate and official pronouncements that attempted to strike a delicate balance between the purported Kharijite position of "*takfir* in infinite regress" and the moderate Murji'ites, or postponers of judgment, whom generally eschewed the practice of widespread and consistent *takfir*.[276] In May of 2017, the Delegated Committee released what is known as the Takfir Memorandum, which sought to codify the balance between the Kharijite radicals remaining within the Islamic State ranks who practice dissimulation and the moderates whom many in the Islamic State viewed as too lenient on those who violated practices mandated by scripture and Sharia.[277] However, the backlash to the memorandum from moderates was swift and robust, causing the Delegated Committee to retract its pronouncement; however, the retraction drew the criticism of those espousing what the rank-and-file members of the Islamic State viewed as Kharijite in tone.[278] Upon the memo's retraction, numerous members of the Islamic State were arrested on suspicion of extremism. Notably, Abu Hafs al-Wad'ani penned a blistering letter to al-Baghdadi

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274 Bunzel, 15–22.

275 Bunzel, 15–19.

276 Bunzel, 17.

277 Bunzel, 17.

278 Bunzel, 18.

questioning the wisdom of the Islamic State to retract the *takfir* memorandum and de-emphasize the practice of *takfir* against those accused of unbelief.[279] The letter earned al-Wad'ani and his radical contemporaries the title of Kharijite and concomitant punishment for such a charge: death at the hands of the Islamic State.[280]

These two episodes of perceived extremism and its subsequent excision from the community of the Islamic State represent a familiar impetus in invoking Kharijite imagery. As we saw with Nasser and the Free Officers, the declaration of groups or individuals as Kharijites necessitated a violent and deadly response from the state. Though many argue over the classification of the Islamic State as a terrorist organization, revolutionary state, or a spate of hybrid organization types, the use of the Kharijite epithet mirrors that discussed prior—its use represents the declaration of an official and religious threat to the community, thus requiring the threat to be exterminated. Moreover, the perceived extremism of the Hazimis, even by the likes of the Islamic State, which is renowned for its brutality and violence, demonstrates the desire of "moderate" members of the Islamic State to legitimize a religious and doctrinal ideology between that of the Kharijites and those they claim excuse the sins of Muslims, the Murji'ites. The persistent centrality of the issue of *takfir* and the threat of hidden Kharijites within the caliphate suggested by the introduction of the *takfir* memorandum and the ongoing debate concerning the subject indicates the continued religious and political debates that concerned not only the place of *takfir* within Islam but the political legitimacy of the organization and the acceptable conduct of Muslims within it. Again, this same set of political, social, and religious calculations dominated the state and public discourse of twentieth-century Egypt concerning the Muslim Brotherhood and the regime of the Free Officers; the debate concerning acceptable Islamist dissent as detailed by both al-Hudaybi and al-Qaradawi decades earlier re-emerged even within the ranks of the Islamic State.

The governing bodies of the Islamic State and the decision-making apparatus functioned as al-Azhar did under Nasser; the apparatus promoted the beliefs and actions of

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279 Bunzel, 18.

280 Bunzel, 18.

the organization's leadership (the Free Officers in the case of al-Azhar) and religiously codified those labeled Kharijites as irredeemable and unpalatable. Such untenable Kharijite behavior thus required the state, whether the modern state of Egypt or the Islamic State, to exercise a form of Weberian power to eliminate those it deemed a threat to its survival and authority. Even for a group whose actions so closely resemble the Kharijites of antiquity and garner it the title of Kharijite, conflict within its ranks of the Islamic State over beliefs viewed as radical or Kharijite-like caused divisions that would hamper its effectiveness, minimize its functioning capacity as a caliphate, and hasten its demise.

As we have seen thus far, disagreements within the Islamic State concerning jurisprudence and the use of the Kharijite curse bear a significant resemblance to the use of the Kharijite moniker in post-revolutionary Egypt and the writings of al-Qaradawi and al-Hudaybi; the manner in which the Kharijite imagery is invoked between rival Islamist factions—notably the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, and al-Nusra—demonstrates only little deviation from the trends we have observed in the cases reviewed. Similarly, rival Islamist groups invoke the Kharijite narrative to gain religious and political legitimacy and demonize its opposition.

Disputes between the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and other Islamist groups are often accompanied by religiously laden rhetoric that often invokes the master Kharijite narrative as well as other Islamic imagery in order to politically and religiously legitimate their claims as to the sole faction sufficiently Islamic in belief and practice, often referred to as the Victorious Sect narrative.[281] As the Islamic State competed with rival Islamist factions contesting both the political legitimacy of the Syrian State during the Syrian Civil War and the religious legitimacy of opposing Islamist groups, it and its rival strategically labeled each other as neo-Kharijites, justifying the use of martial force against their rivals.[282] The employment of the Kharijite narrative in this context is critical for two reasons: first, it lays the foundation for the Islamic State to operate as the sole religious heir to the Islamic

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[281] Hafez, "Not My Brother's Keeper." The victorious sect narrative will not be analyzed at length in this work, however, for a full explanation and analysis of the narrative, see Hafez, 2017, "Not My Brother's Keeper."

[282] Abdallah Suleiman Ali, "Jabhat Al-Nusra Launches War against IS in Qalamoun," *Al-Monitor*, May 12, 2015, sec. Editorial, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2015/05/syira-qalamoun-jabhat-al-nusra-war-isis-kharijites.html.

caliphate. Second, and more importantly, it attempts to legitimize its claim to political power over its territory in Weberian terms—as those who monopolize the use of violence within a given territory—and thus maximizes its ability to claim popular support and access to resources contested by multiple groups.[283] Said differently, the use of the Islamic lexicon in the form of the Kharijite narrative permitted the Islamic State to delimit its claim to the economic, political, religious, and military hegemony it claimed over the territory it held. This epitomizes the multifaceted power and authority contained within the Kharijite narrative for those who understand its significance within Islamic culture and history; wielded as a curse, it forces what may previously be disparate and unconnected phenomena into a religiously caged discourse that is understood by its user and the audience for which the epithet is intended to influence. While the successful use and tangible outcomes of the charge of Kharijism are far more nebulous and more challenging to measure than in the case of Egypt, the use of the term exposes the rhetorical combatant's self-perceived identity, religious and political legitimacy, and worldview.

A similar case in which Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State declare each other Kharijites yields a similar outcome and analysis. The Islamic States Yemeni outgrowth released a documentary in 2020 entitled *Absolved before Your Lord* (*ma'aziratan ila Rabbikum*) in which the Islamic State details the significant differences between the two— the caliphate, Islamic jurisprudence, alliances, sectarianism, and puritanism—and label members of al-Qaeda as un-believers who fail to wage war on alleged polytheists and heterodox Muslims. The refutation of the claim is swift and accompanied by the tried and true charge of Kharijism. Al-Qaeda and other Islamist groups label the Islamic state as modern-day neo-Kharijites who are beyond the pale of acceptable Islamic conduct.[284] Such claims against the Islamic State appear to strike at the heart of their claim as the sole sect of rightly practicing Salafists; the Islamic State expends inordinate amounts of effort in rebutting the claim, an indication that it takes the charge seriously and sees it as a label that

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[283] Weber, Gerth, and Mills, *From Max Weber*, 78.

[284] Mohammed M. Hafez, "The Crisis Within Jihadism: The Islamic State's Puritanism vs. al-Qa`ida's Populism," *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, September 17, 2020, 45, https://ctc.usma.edu/the-crisis-within-jihadism-the-islamic-states-puritanism-vs-al-qaidas-populism/.

potentially damages its image among Salafists and Muslims in general.[285] This evidence indicates that the charge, which at times is seemingly leveled in haste, dramatically impacts how groups present themselves to specific audiences and demonstrates a profound sensitivity of Islamists to their self-identity. The Islamic state finds the charge of Kharijism leveled against it by other Islamists deeply troubling, indicating that it understands the legitimizing power of the narrative in conferring political, popular, and religious validity to their cause.

D.   CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to outline, explain, and analyze the works of al-Hudaybi and al-Qaradawi and infighting among the Islamic State and rival Islamists groups where the charge and narrative of the Kharijites is invoked. While this survey of Islamist groups using the master narrative is neither complete nor all-encompassing, it best crystallizes the significant trends and themes that emerge when Islamists and the like invoke Kharijite imagery. What trends emerge from this chapter mirror those which were revealed in chapters II and III: the Kharijite narrative is invoked intentionally to religiously and politically legitimize the efforts of one Islamist group over another in both a general and Weberian sense; delegitimize the claim some Islamist groups make the narrative of the Victorious Sect; and define the boundaries of acceptable doctrine, jurisprudence, and behavior within the Islamic community. While these trends will be discussed more in-depth in the following chapter, their persistence and congruency with earlier instances in which the Kharijite narrative was invoked demonstrate the importance of not only the symbolism of the Kharijites as an anathematized group within the Islamic cultural idiom, but the power of religious tropes to confer power, authority, and legitimacy.

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[285] Hafez, *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point,* 45.

V.   CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored how the epithet of Kharijite and its associated narrative have been and are invoked by both state and non-state actors. In investigating this phenomenon, this study analyzed: the origins of the Kharijite master narrative; the use of the narrative in modern Egypt from 1952 to the present day; and its use by prominent Islamist leaders and organizations from 1977 to the present day.

When the Islamic past is made pertinent to the present, meticulously selected tropes are brought forward in a re-invented manner, blending the past's well-worn orthodox symbology with the forces of contemporary life. As Serif Mardin wrote, "[t]he reproduction of Islamic societies is linked to a common use of an Islamic idiom by the members of such societies."[286] Through bringing this forward, modern leaders of Islamic civilization have combined schemes of modernization and secularization with "narratives of the lives and pious deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, biographies of Muslim holy men, poetry and love stories placed in an Islamic setting."[287] Thus, identity, and more pertinently, self-created identity, lays at the heart of the cyclical Kharijite discourse. Each of the actors explored in this thesis which has invoked the epithet of Kharijite—the Free Officers, al-Azhar, al-Hudaybi, al-Qaradawi, the Islamic State, and al-Qaeda—all attempt to reproduce some semblance of the Islamic cultural idiom by selectively recalling the narrative of the Kharijites, framing their existence and legitimacy squarely within an Islamic setting.

Both state and non-state actors wield the curse of Kharijite and invoke the master narrative to legitimize their authority and power while delegitimizing opposition actors within an Islamic context. Notably, the Egyptian state invoked the Kharijite narrative against the Muslim Brotherhood to politically delegitimize the movement and consolidate its own political authority and monopoly on the use of violence.[288] Moreover, the use of

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286 Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey*, 3.

287 Mardin, 5.

288 Weber, Gerth, and Mills, *From Max Weber*, 78.

the Kharijite narrative by Nasser and al-Azhar promoted the Islamic legitimacy of a regime that in reality lacked any cogent ideology; the Islamic credentials of al-Azhar imbued the regime of the Free Officers with a widely understood religious, and more importantly, political legitimacy. In casting Nasser and the subsequent leaders of Egypt in the role of Ali, with the Muslim Brotherhood and Takfir wal-Hijra in the role of the Kharijites, the use of the Kharijite master narrative necessitated the repression of the Islamist groups, for their ideology and religious zeal were far too dangerous to operate within Egyptian society. As Ali dealt with the Kharijites, so too did Egyptian leaders dispense with the Muslim Brotherhood and its extremist offshoots. As the term's use continued and popular understanding of the causes for violent extremism matured, however, the Kharijite narrative evolved into a complex and nuanced discourse.

As the use of the Kharijite label continued after Nasser's death, the neo-Kharijites were no longer seen as essentialist, eternal threats to society; rather, the failings of the state and society to adequately confront the social, economic, and political woes of Egyptian society took center stage in the discourse concerning religious extremism and political violence. Just as literature regarding the Kharijites of antiquity evolved to present a fairer, less polemical depiction of the group, so too did the contemporary discourse concerning political violence and religious extremism in Egypt. Rather than the Kharijites existing as a monolithic and overly distilled group, scholars have argued that the Kharijites of antiquity were motivated to act against the Caliphate by a variety of factors.

The invocation of the Kharijite narrative reveals the scars and instability of the post-colonial era. After centuries of colonial rule, many fledgling regimes—like the Free Officers of Egypt—lacked the political and social legitimacy required to govern over its newly formed territories. In a matter of years, regimes were challenged to meet the demands of an ever-modernizing world, the bi-polar political climate, and govern in a way that blended Western forms of governance with those indigenous to the land. Such competing forces and perpetual instability produced numerous political dilemmas and legitimacy crises for post-colonial states.

In Egypt, this conundrum manifested itself in the form of Nasser's hybridized ideology that blended tenets of Western governance with Islam, Arabism, and Africanism.

Egypt, and many of the authoritarian nations of the Middle East, lacked the popular legitimacy democratic regimes enjoyed. Thus, regimes defined by strong-man politicking manufactured governing ideologies, imbuing the regime with a smattering of sub-ideologies that attempted to ameliorate the unstable conditions of the modern state. The Islamic cultural idiom that the Kharijite narrative belongs to is one such sub-ideology within the ideology of Nasserism that defined the fragile regime of the Free Officers. Said differently, the Free Officers used the Kharijite narrative to make up for their lack of legitimacy. Thus, its invocation by the current leadership of Egypt represents yet another phase in which the curse of Kharijite has been invoked to consolidate state power and is potentially indicative of the regime's self-perceived dearth of legitimacy.

When invoked by Islamists, the Kharijite narrative is intended to delegitimize rival Islamist factions and place the user of the epithet within the domain of acceptable Islamic behavior. When used by Islamists like al-Hudaybi and al-Qaradawi—both of whom accepted the construct of the international system and modern state—the Kharijite narrative served as a reformist shibboleth, marking members of the Muslim Brotherhood and other like-minded Islamists as moderates willing to work within the confines of the Egyptian state. Al-Hudaybi used the narrative to simultaneously marginalize the efforts of extremists within the Muslim Brotherhood while condemning the orthodox scholars of al-Azhar for promoting the secular and arguably anti-Islamist agenda of the state. For al-Qaradawi, the use of the Kharijite narrative served a very similar purpose. However, Qaradawi wielded the Kharijite narrative to identify the failings of modern Islamic society that nurtures and often promotes religious extremism within the community, particularly among Muslim youth. Both al-Hudaybi and al-Qaradawi envisioned a moderate Islamist movement that worked within the structure of modern states to advance their agenda; however, the importance of both al-Hudaybi's and al-Qaradawi's use of the Kharijite narrative as a critique and moderating force cannot be overstated. Both had been labeled as neo-Kharijites and imprisoned by the Egyptian state as members of the Muslim Brotherhood; both had used the same narrative and Islamic bogeyman to bolster the position of the Islamist movement vis-à-vis the state. To use the narrative in such a way, as did al-Hudaybi and al-Qaradawi, further demonstrates the plasticity of the Kharijite narrative.

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The Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and al-Nusra level the charge of Kharijite against rival Islamist factions in much the same way as the state and moderate Islamists utilized the term. Within the Islamic State, the charge of Kharijite was leveled against those within its ranks deemed too extreme concerning the doctrine of "*takfir* in infinite regress."[289] The power of this specific Islamic idiom is demonstrated by the juridical disagreements between members of the Islamic State in which the charge of Kharijite is leveled; for such a violent and extremist group to be caught in the same rhetorical debate concerning the brand as both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian state is noteworthy par excellence. This point is made that much clearer when rival radical Islamist groups level the charge against one another to delegitimize the opposition's claim to the resources, recruits, and the mantle of the Victorious Sect.[290] Not only does this link the narrative and its use across a range of historical agents, it illuminates the Islamic identity and narrative within which the actors portrays themselves acting.

In all the cases reviewed herein, the invocation of the Kharijite label by various actors, in disparate times, and under distinct conditions, underscores the power of the Islamic cultural idiom, and more generally, the force in which ancient cultural idioms and ritual narratives bring to bear on contemporary events. The power and pervasiveness of the Kharijite narrative within the collective memory of the Islamic community represent the individual manifestations of a much larger and more engrained religious force. As Serif Mardin notes, Islam is far more than just a religion: "it structures the social life of Islamic societies … it provides the foundations for political obligation and that, in short … penetrates the smallest interstices of daily life and of social and political" phenomenon.[291] Actors recalling the Kharijite narrative invoke an indigenous, Islamic folk devil that is easily molded to fit the need of its user. As has been shown in this thesis, the use of the Kharijite narrative reveals deeper political motivations and the societal problems that are all too often papered-over with more easily accessible Islamic tropes. In this respect, its use in any context minimizes the real and tangible issues present in Islamic and global

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[289] Bunzel, "Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State," 15–17.

[290] Hafez, *"Not My Brother's Keeper."*

[291] Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey*, 3.

society; it obscures both the foundational catalysts of religious extremism, politically motivated violence, as well as the actual historical group for which the epithet is named. By minimizing certain persons and groups to an ill-fitting, yet potent manipulation of a historical movement whose real origins and motivations were anything but certain, those who cast the Kharijite curse—Nasser, Sadat, Mubarak, and al-Sisi—minimize the complexity and nuance of their cause in a façade of religious lore rather than confronting actual realities of the contemporary world.

Actors who invoked the Kharijite narrative—from Nasser and his Egyptian statist experiment to the extremists of the Islamic State—wrapped themselves in an Islamic cultural narrative with the aim of legitimizing their existence, fending off contenders to their authority, and consolidating power within the confines of their borders. This phenomenon resembles Weber's definition of the modern state yet is modified with a religious allegory; what emerges is an Islamo-Weberian motif, one that defines the ideation of modern Middle Eastern states in the Islamic vernacular. The cases reviewed in this thesis represent the formation of the modern state with an Islamic addendum, and the restructuring of political and religious actors within the newly (re)formed state. Nasser and the Free Officers used the narrative of the Kharijites to legitimize their monopoly of the use of violence in midcentury Egypt; al-Hudaybi and al-Qaradawi invoked the Kharijite narrative to formulate an Islamist movement that fit within the construct of the modern state; the Islamic State—whether a recognized state or not—used the curse of the Kharijites to consolidate power within its ranks and against those seeking the illegitimate use of violence within its territory. Thus, the Kharijite narrative and its use in state formation represent an Islamic interpretation of the Weberian definition of a state.

A.   A WESTERN CASE OF THE KHARIJITES

To draw a parallel to Western terms, the charge of Kharijite is akin to calling an individual or group "communist." Within the liberal democratic lexicon, the charge of communist reflects many of the same complexities and intricacies of the Kharijite slur. The casting of the communist aspersion evokes a visceral response from those who receive or hear it; for those who bore witness to the anti-communist sentiment within U.S. culture

throughout the twentieth century, the meaning and gravity of the charge is undeniable. Its use all but eliminates any possible acquittal of the communist charge. However, like the Kharijite curse, a more in-depth review reveals the complexity of the charge and its internal and external reverberations. The communist epithet subsumes any reality of the communist or socialist cause; not all communists are motivated by control or are intrinsically evil. Rather, they reflect a variety of motivations and diverse origins. Much like the Kharijite curse belongs to an Islamic cultural lexicon, the communist charge belongs to an American cultural lexicon in which a term and concept connote a meaning, identity, or worse, damnation.

B.   IMPLICATIONS

This thesis has reviewed a spectrum of literature to identify the connections between the contemporary and pejorative use of the Kharijite label and its origins in medieval Islamic heresiography and historiography. In presenting this material and analysis, this researcher has attempted to enrich Western audiences' conception of the Kharijites, the use of the term, and its associated narrative when applied to both historical and contemporary events.

An oversimplified and essentialist view of the Kharijites pervades introductory and intermediate scholarship. The Kharijites are often depicted as violent and intransigent religious extremists within textbooks and literature about Islamic history. While this characterization is frequently correct for the Azariqa Kharijites, it fails to recognize the diversity of the Kharijites; the Suffriyya and the Ibadiyya Kharijites broke from the Azariqa because of their extremist principles. Moreover, the only surviving sect of the Kharijites, the Ibadiyya, have since continued to articulate the doctrinal differences between both the more violent of the Kharijites and Sunni orthodoxy. In ignoring these key differences and oversimplifying the narrative of the Kharijites, scholars do a disservice to all students of Islamic history by pairing down a disparate yet historically important movement to a single note parable. Rather than translating the characterization of the Kharijites penned by medieval Islamic historiographers and heresiographers into the overstated image so often found in Western literature, a bit of nuance and a detailed discussion of the Kharijites, their

role in the founding years of Islam, and indelible impact on contemporary events, would go a long way to enriching Western perspectives of the group. In doing so, Middle East policymakers will better understand the complexity of the Kharijites and the possible subtext when the curse is leveled. More broadly, by consuming and understanding the content of this thesis, Western audiences will come to understand the authority and omnipresence of Islamic cultural idioms and folk devils within contemporary Islamic societies.

The stickiness of religious and political tropes—like that of the Kharijites—often saturate our understanding of modern-day phenomena. In the cases of twentieth-century Egypt or the rise and fall of the Islamic state, the narrative of the Kharijites and its use as a curse frame the way in which we, as external, non-Muslim observers, understand the various elements of events as they unfold. With respect to Western policymakers, such framing often results in analysis, or worse, the formulation of policy, that is laden with incomplete assessments and injected with false narratives that ignore the reality of political, social, and economic forces at play. By introducing the allegorical potential of the Kharijite narrative and its ability to taint the layers of history, culture, and politics within the Middle East, this researcher has attempted to illuminate and contextualize its major reoccurrences within the recent past. Thus, by fully understanding the intricacies of interactions between Middle Eastern states and Islamist movements, interested parties are then better equipped with the requisite knowledge when undertaking to generate and apply policy.

The recent history of the Middle East and the place that the Kharijite narrative occupies within it indicate that Middle Eastern regimes that promiscuously use the term are not the sole responsible parties of the neo-Kharijite phenomenon; U.S. Middle East policy has profound implications for the creation of religious extremists and political violence. As an ally to many regimes that have employed the Kharijite narrative in a pejorative manner, the United States must be keenly aware of the political and religious rhetorical battles that ensue within the borders of allied and partner states. All too often, U.S. security assistance, weapons sales, and economic aid are used to increase the security apparatus of regimes such as Egypt; that same security state is often turned against those citizens' political opposition and civil disobedience. Such violent clampdowns foster the

environment in which radicalization, terrorism, and politically motivated violence commonly thrive. When Middle Eastern regimes demonize dissidents as neo-Kharijites and violently suppress political opposition using resources provided by the United States, the United States implicitly agrees to the use of the Kharijite label. If the United States fails to mitigate such unrestricted and unconditional security policies toward regimes who indiscriminately oppress their citizenry, then we are at risk of bearing the brunt of the Kharijite charge ourselves.

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