

Preventing Harm: Refutation of Militant Jihad in “Revisionist Literature”

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Abstract

This article showcases why ideology, and more specifically religion, is pertinent to the study of deradicalization by examining the influential revisionist efforts of two former advocates of Salafi-Jihadism, Dr. Fadl [alias for Sayyed Imam al-Sharif] in Egypt in 2007 and Abu Hafs in Morocco in 2009. With recourse to both the revisionist ideologues’ argumentation and primary documents, we show that these efforts are informed by an Islamic legal perspective, which is undergirded by an interpretive approach constructed around the intent and higher objectives (maqāsīd) of the shari‘a. As shown, this takes the form of engaged readings of the classical Islamic rulings pertaining to armed jihad and its conduct in the light of the realities of modern societies. On the basis of their revisionist methodology, Dr. Fadl and Abu Hafs develop a faith-based model of containment that attempts to reconcile Islamist political thinking with the role of the nation-state in safeguarding the goals of the shari‘a as a means to preventing internal strife (fitna). Against this backdrop, the article argues that both authors’ call for a revival of the shari‘a’s higher objectives provides jihad with a new conceptualization and, in doing so, contributes to broader debates about the role that religious values can play in dismantling radical theological interpretations of politics and religiosity.

Keywords: Ideology, deradicalization, extremism, religion, Islamic law, Salafi-Jihadism

Preliminary Notes

In the heyday of combating terrorism after 9/11, the perception was widespread that the only way to put an end to Jihadist violence was a global war on terror—either directly or by proxy since the borderline separating national and transnational Jihadi violence had become fuzzy. The Jihadist has become an international pariah and global enemy. It was in this climate that an auto criticism emerged from within Jihadi Salafi groups. Such self-criticism(s) was nourished by former preachers of Jihadism who began to question their previously held views by challenging the religious legality of contemporary Jihadism and its doctrine of armed jihad through the lens of Islamic jurisprudence. Their findings are known under the generic term murājaāt (literally: revisions, reevaluations, or re-examinations). These critical revisions were inspired by one school of jurisprudential thought and its method of textual interpretation, known as maqāid al-sharia (higher objectives of the sharia). In short, this school’s primary aim is to elucidate the ‘genuine’ spirit of Islamic law—broader than both Natural and Positive Laws—to safeguard the well-being of the Muslim community (umma). This ambitious aim is construed in terms of two interdependent forms of relationship: coherent and order-based internal Muslim relations and manageable external Muslim/non-Muslim relations. Classical Muslim jurisprudence relying on this method would emphasize that legal commands and prohibitions, including the justifications and requirements for waging jihad, depend on the circumstances and necessities surrounding Muslims themselves. In effect, the incorporation of this method and its implied worldview into the juristic discourse of jihad articulates different normative rules for proper conduct in warfare to a) protect the moral and social order of the community, b) maintain its stabilizing political institutions, and c) defend its security against external dangers.

This article showcases two major examples of revisionist readings by former ideologues of Salafi-Jihadism. The first case focuses closely on the document first published in 2007 under the title: Tarshid al-amal al-jihadi fi-misr wal ālam (“Rationalizing Jihadist Action in Egypt and the World”, henceforth RJA). The author, Sayyed Imam al-Sharif (alias Dr. Fadl) is the former chief ideologue of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and mentor of Ayman al-Zawahiri, the current leader of Al Qaeda [AQ]. The second document, with the title Ansifuna (Be Fair to Us), dates back to 2009 and was published as a letter to the Moroccan authorities by Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab Rafiqi, (alias Abu Hafs). Abu Hafs’ letter-document Ansifuna is the fruit of a series of earlier internal Jihadi discussions and revisions conducted inside Moroccan prisons.[1] Importantly, Abu Hafs’ stance

is also inspired by, *inter alia*, Dr. Fadl's RJA. Abu Hafs' revisions are a product of an internal study program of ideological deradicalization and reeducation conducted by Sheikh Abu Hafs himself. As such, it is worth investigating as the first of its kind in the Moroccan model of individual deradicalization attempts.

Dr. Fadl and Abu Hafs both explore and analyze possible ways of combating Jihadism based on what we term here the "cumulative approach"—a method that uses content analysis of the Islamic sources as a tool for bringing each ruling or decision on—in this case—jihad to conform with the higher objectives of the sharia (*maqāid*). Since Jihadist ideology is founded on theological premises first and jurisprudential premises second, a need for examining (and refuting) these premises through the cumulative approach becomes a religious duty upon both the religious scholar and the Muslim ruler.[2] And it is at this juncture that both Dr. Fadl and Abu Hafs propose, in their jurisprudentially founded revisions, to primarily treat the issue of jihad and its regulations on legal grounds alone, not on theological ones.[3]

In general, therefore, the eagerness of these former ideologues of jihad to dismantle Salafi-Jihadism might be seen as an attempt: (1) to relegate armed struggle to the authority of the state and (2) to protect Muslim societies from all forms of internal strife (*fitna*). However, the guiding principles, it should be noted, are the same in both cases, namely the prevention of Harm (*dar al-mafāsīd*) and the promotion or preservation of Benefit (*jalb al-masālih*). Through the prism of this cumulative approach, cognitive and behavioral deradicalization through jurisprudential revisions—as in the two present case studies—should be viewed as an authentic Islamic attempt in preventing harm. The religious argument in any containment of violence is in the public interest, or in the language of jurisprudence: an unrestricted interest (*masālih mursalah*). This Islamic model of conflict resolution and deradicalization—as we shall see—is moulded by this underlying objective of the sharia: "Whatever contributes to the preservation of these five essentials] religion, human life, the faculty of reason, progeny, and material wealth[, says Raysuni, is a benefit, and everything which causes them to be forfeited is a source of harm, while its prevention is a benefit." [4]

Despite the marked influence of Morocco's Maliki tradition of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) on Abu Hafs' stance vis-à-vis the monarchy, what links Abu Hafs most directly with the anti-Jihadist, revisionist stream represented by Dr. Fadl is his agreement with the basic tenet that Muslims today are not obliged to abide by the opinions of the four major Sunni schools (*madhāhib*). [5] Despite their shared commitment to the higher objectives of Islamic law, though, Dr. Fadl and Abu Hafs differ slightly in terms of how they deploy the principle of preventing harm. In Dr. Fadl's usage, this principle serves the purpose of delegitimizing all sorts of atrocities against civilians, often with primary reference to the prevention of chaos in society. Abu Hafs' approach, on the other hand, serves to revive the monarchy's theological legitimacy, and to warn against the unbridled license of practicing *takfir* [apostasy or excommunication] against the state. Because of these aims, in Abu Hafs' usage, the prevention of harm is undoubtedly an argument in favor of kingly authority in both religious and political matters: *i.e.*, as the Imam. [6]

In dealing with an Islamic model of containment of violence and deradicalization, we have chosen these two texts for three reasons: genre, methodology and impact. Genre-wise, Dr. Fadl's and Abu Hafs' revisions belong to a literary genre—*murājaāt*—in which an author reconsiders critically his own or other scholars' views, ideas, and positions. In the case of our two former-Jihadists, their revisions were written as legal treatises with slightly discursive/polemical tendencies that aim to both refute and convince. As far as methodology is concerned, they both use what in Islamic tradition is called "examination of textual validation" (*tasīl sharī.*) within the purview of *maqāsid's* cumulative approach. Here, our two former Jihadists follow a twofold checking procedure: in addition to text-proofing every view or ruling on jihad and *takfir*—for instance—the choice of the proof-texts—Quran, Sunna of the prophet, and a saying of a religious scholar—are examined in the light of the sharia's higher objectives. In doing so, the two former Jihadists not only break away from their own previously held militant views, but they also challenge the very methodology through which Jihadists validate their stance on jihad and *takfir*. Rejecting the use of proof-texting on its own—in the restorative approach—is not due to its inadequacy as a hermeneutical method but because it contradicts the very spirit of Islamic law and its ethical philosophy: preventing harm and preserving benefit.

In terms of their wider impact, both revisions are best discussed in terms of their reception and discursive performance. Upon its publication, the RJA was widely reviewed in both Egyptian and Arabic newspapers and journals, and among them especially in media outlets supportive of government policies. This in turn led to an increase in the resentment felt against Dr. Fadl by his former Islamist/Jihadist cohorts. Not only had Dr. Fadl 'betrayed' his earlier radical ideals; he also gave local authorities the ideological ammunition they needed to undermine the religious legitimacy of their actions and visions. This resentment found its most obvious expression in one of the more venomous attacks on Dr. Fadl in Ayman al-Zawahiri's treatise, *Exonerating the Nation of the Pen and the Sword from the Blemish of the Accusation of Weakness and Fatigue*.^[7] As one of the Jihadi activists who had sought inspiration and guidance from Dr. Fadl during the Afghan-jihad in the 1980s, and as an ardent defender of Dr. Fadl's previously held methodology on Jihadist issues, Zawahiri had every reason to take an early opportunity of declaring himself a fierce opponent of his former mentor. As the Arabic title of his reply indicates, in the eyes of Zawahiri, the main tendency of Dr. Fadl's RJA to focus on the alleged weaknesses or flaws of armed Islamist movements is an attempt to cover up Muslims' neglect of their duty to fight the West and their collaborators, i.e., Arab regimes. An important clue into Dr. Fadl's RJA's impact may be gleaned from the online discussions that were organized by al-Qaeda's official media production group, As-Sahab, in December 2007, between sympathizers and supporters of the jihadi brand of Salafism and al-Zawahiri "on the password-protected al-Ekhliss and al-Hesbah forums." As pointed out by T. Rid and M. Hecker, Dr. Fadl's revisions formed an important backdrop for these discussions; and this leaves us in no doubt that the revisionist views expounded in Dr. Fadl's RJA were perceived by al-Qaeda members as a potential threat to their radical ideology.^[8]

Although less prominent among international Jihadi Salafist circles than Dr. Fadl, Abu Hafs' reputation as a young Wahhabi Salafist, who witnessed the first Afghan war together with his father when he was very young, and who later studied in Saudi universities, made him nationally famous as one of the five icons of Jihadi Salafism's first generation in Morocco. He became, through his study groups in the city of Fez in the 90s, the chief ideologue of the Moroccan brand of transnational Jihadism.^[9] His revisions constituted a blow to Jihadi groups and later became a practical example of ideological deradicalization in support of the monarchy's counter-Jihadist strategy. Abu Hafs' delegitimization of armed jihad and the theology of takfir in his concise legal treatise is written in clear and simple language, where each of the ten principles are supported by ten counterarguments founded on the universal objectives of the sharia. Abu Hafs wrote his legal treatise in the form of a letter addressed to both the authorities and the public.

Revisions as a Juridical Genre of Deradicalization and Reconciliation: Sharia's raison d'être is Preserving Benefits and Preventing Harm

Though limited in their application and experimental in their nature, the first significance of our two cases lies in the insistence that the Islamic tradition can be usefully conceptualized as a means of communicating ideas and opinions against Jihadist ideology. As such, it draws our attention to the religious model of conflict resolution, which offers a proactive and holistic approach to how to engage a Jihadist into a process of deradicalization with a primary focus on the ideological drivers of violence (al-unf), radicalization (al-tarruf) and extremism (ghuluw). Similarly, the most important question in these revisions is not only how to deradicalize a Jihadist but how to help a Jihadist to ideologically self-deradicalize. In a similar way, these revisions reveal the limitations of the security solution and call for an all-encompassing solution which includes spiritual security. There are no "final" military or political solutions to violent extremism for the sole reason that security solutions cannot "distinguish between political terror and crime. And unlike the criminal, the political terrorist is not easily deterred by punishment."^[10] Put another way, the logic used in the "final solution" to political problems results in death.^[11] A second significance of these Jihadist revisions lies in their scholarly perception of radicalization and deradicalization as processes in which spiritual and religious values are cherished and nourished.

Context and Motivation: Senseless Confrontations

What do Jihadists want to achieve? asks Dr. Fadl in RJA. The question is implicit in his statement: “Jihadists are engaged in meaningless confrontations.”[12] The sixth principle in Abu Hafs’ ten principles reaffirms this tragic realization: “We affirm our condemnation and denunciation of all indiscriminate bombings that have taken place either in our country or in other Muslim countries. These bombings took lives and caused the destruction of inviolable wealth. The harm (mafāsīd) that the indiscriminate or senseless bombings produce cannot be sanctioned by neither “the explicit objective of the sharia nor sound reason.”[13] Often this revisionist trope justifies the need for criticism and a call for a rectification of previously held views and doctrines.[14] In other words, the question that the revisionist asks is always: What went wrong?[15] The revisionist tries to identify the causes of the failures and rectify them. Abu Hafs talks about undertaking revisions of Jihadism without recanting armed jihad as a defensive instrument, the use of which is governed by the higher objectives of law. In this case, Abu Hafs, like earlier revisionists, “stresses the importance of introspection, which would allow him to reflect upon and distance himself from past mistakes, and to correct the path of Jihad.”[16] Correcting past mistakes, but how do our two revisionists do that? Here, both Dr. Fadl and Abu Hafs seek refuge in the maqāsīd jurisprudence of the Malikite Jurist al-Shatibi (d. 1388). Dr. Fadl explicitly states that “preserving the lives of Muslims and their strength is among the objectives of Islamic Law.”[17]

The pervasive terror that the Jihadist preaches operates within an apocalyptic framework “beyond [Western conceptions of] ideology and the political.”[18] In the same vein, Jean Baudrillard expresses his doubt in Western perceptions of Good and Evil as a meaningful explanatory framework of today’s pervasive terror. The notions of Good and Evil in Western enlightenment thought are perceived in terms of progress, i.e., Good shall win over Evil in a rational society. He concludes that the terrorist “does not seek to change the world but to radicalize it by means of [human] sacrifice”[19] a savage chaos, in Salafi Jihadism’s explanatory framework, is a wishful and unavoidable human condition.[20] Both Dr. Fadl and Abu Hafs have also come to similar conclusions, but unlike Baudrillard, they also had firsthand experience: being Jihadists and Muftis of Jihadism. Our two revisionists would give Baudrillard a consenting node regarding the inadequacy of the Enlightenment’s perception of Good and Evil to explain the theological explanatory framework of global jihad. Since terror against terror has failed as a universal answer, our revisionists have turned to maqāsīd not only as a theory of law but also as a philosophy of ethics. In fact, even Baudrillard, inadvertently, would have a leaning toward maqāsīd’s philosophy of ethics: “if Islam were to dominate the world terrorism would have risen up against Islam.”[21] Let us now explore how the sharia’s *raison d’être*—preserving benefits and preventing harm—works.

In the first part of this article, we examine how the principle of preventing harm is applied by Sayyed Imam al-Sharif (Dr. Fadl). Due to space, we limit ourselves to the publication known as Rationalizing Jihadist Action in Egypt and the World (henceforth RJA). This is widely recognized as the crowning achievement of Dr. Fadl’s revisions and can therefore serve as a fruitful reference point for discussing how religious arguments can be effectively used to develop new practical ways of policy intervention vis-à-vis Jihadist insurgency. This part provides an understanding of Dr. Fadl’s notion of preventing harm through a close analysis of two interrelated corollaries in RJA. First is the claim that Muslims today are disempowered and therefore not obliged to comply with the requirements of armed jihad. Second is the concept of the ‘public good’ (maslaha) used by Dr. Fadl to undermine the legality of waging armed jihad against the West (far enemy). The second part of the article contains an exploration of the juridical arguments put forward by Abu Hafs in his revisions, which also builds on the idea of preventing harm. The significance of Abu Hafs’ contribution lies in his return to Maliki law and to its philosophy of ethics: maqāsīd al-sharia (higher objectives of the sharia). This return represents both a rejection of extremism (ghuluw) and radicalism (tatarruf) and marks a shift toward the endorsement of the Moroccan monarchy on purely religious grounds. Revisions in Egypt: Preventing Political and Social Evils in the Light of Maqāsīd Jurisprudence and siyāsa shariyya

Dr. Fadl subscribes to Salafism, in contrast to reformist intellectuals who mostly conceptualize Islam from a modernist perspective. In formulating his revisionist standpoint, Dr. Fadl attempts to frame his arguments in ways that discourage rebellion (khurūj) in accordance with the position of most traditional Sunni scholars.

The significance of this stance lies in the fact that it tries to revive the quietist tendency of Salafism within the framework of classical Sunni discourses that call for obedience to governmental authority. That is, he emphasizes the necessity of “commanding the right and preventing evil” (*al-amr bi-l maruf wa-l nahy an al-munkar*) in a manner that serves to undermine calls for revolt against the state; even in the case of ‘sinful’ authorities. [22]

In doing so, Dr. Fadl situates himself not in a particular Sunni law school but more broadly in the pre-modern tradition known as *siyāsa shariyya*, whose main representative is the influential Hanbali scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), who also occupies a central place in modern Jihadism. Among other characteristics, this tradition views politics as inextricably embedded in the sharia but draws a clear “distinction between rules that are fixed” and rules pertaining to the political domain (*siyāsa*) that change in conformity with the requirements of public order.[23] Typically, therefore, proponents of this tradition raise questions about the protection of Muslim interests (*maslaha*) and the challenge of adapting to changing conditions while retaining a strong commitment to the various dimensions of the sharia, including the legal, normative, and social. Great emphasis is therefore placed on the common good, in terms of promoting benefit and preventing harm (understood as the prevention of internal disorder (*fitna*)). Importantly, the practice of jihad, as this tradition frames it, is relegated from the individual sphere to the dominion of the state or the executive power (be it president or king). In fact, the standard view of jihad throughout many Sunni writings in the pre-modern period makes best sense when read against this background.

Already before his formal membership of Zawahiri’s underground organization, al-Jihad, in 1977, and most emphatically after the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981, Dr. Fadl’s ideas drew dissenting Islamists into the politics of revolutionary armed struggle against ‘apostate’ Muslim rulers of nation-states. In the RJA, however, Dr. Fadl aims to provoke a debate that challenges the typical vision of jihad adopted by different insurgent groups to justify attacks against the nation-state, contrary to his own previously held views. To be sure, the version of *siyāsa shariyya* embraced in the RJA is less conformist than other versions that have been adopted in the pre-modern era. As such, Dr. Fadl may be situated in the line of Ibn Taymiyya as a modern exponent of the *siyāsa shariyya*, seeking reconciliation with the existing nation-state through an acceptance not so much of its legitimacy but rather of its *de facto* political authority (*ghalabah*—conquest of power). That is to say, the text endorses a quietist (rather than a politically activist) stance, but within the framework defined by the mainstream Sunni juristic discourse.

Importantly, Dr. Fadl does not reject militant jihad out of hand as a religious duty; he nowhere declares, for example, that he sees spiritual jihad as a substitute for militant jihad, which is typical for reformists inclined toward Sufism. Indeed, the phenomenon coined as “the spiritualization of jihad” by David Cook has little or no affinity to Dr. Fadl’s position in the RJA.[24] Rather, Dr. Fadl focuses upon uncovering what he calls the “reasons behind (past) rulings on jihad” (*asbāb al-jihad*).

Rejecting Violence toward the State as Preservation of the Purpose of the Law

The points of departure for his discussion are the controlling rules—or regulations (*thawābit*)—that derive from the larger purposes underlying Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). As described by Dr. Fadl, in early Islam these regulations formed a backdrop to precepts (*ahkām*) in connection with specific situations. Among other things, this meant that an action cannot be undertaken if it generates a harmful outcome, “even when the action pursues a religiously legitimate goal (*shar ṭ*).”[25] This applies particularly, he says, in cases where a goal demands an effort that “exceeds the person’s capabilities or does not suit the person and his circumstances.”[26] Regarding the issue of jihad, which is “the pinnacle of Islam”, there are no exceptions to this principle, quite the contrary: it helps Muslims not only to safeguard their religious way of life and worldly interests (*dīn and dunyā*), but also to show restraint in matters relating to “bloodshed” (*al-’ihtiyāt fi-’umūr al-dimā’*).[27]

According to Dr. Fadl, the kind of armed jihad pursued by Islamist militants relies on the use of unlawful tactics based on the “secularist” maxim “the end justifies the means” (*al-ghāya tubarrir al-wasīla*).[28] Dr. Fadl goes so far as to say that those “led astray” by this logic in today’s world have used whatever means possible

to achieve their aims, relying on what he calls “the jurisprudence of justification (*fiqh al-tabrīr*).”[29] Those who follow this way or path (*maslak*) may approve (*yastahsin*) of [things] or perpetrate hideous actions and then look for evidence in support of them afterward. In the early Muslim community, the righteous forefathers (*al-salaf al-sālih*) would refer to these individuals as “the adherents of impure novelties” (*bid‘ah*). The same description could apply, Dr. Fadl maintains, to contemporaries who tend to isolate the textbooks of the pious *salaf* from their original context. In support of this contention, Dr. Fadl points to Ibn Taymiyya who argued that the founders of the four Sunni legal schools “prohibited people from blindly emulating them (*taqlidihim*).”[30] Furthermore, when early Muslims had to decide about any matter in religion, including the duty of *jihad*, their answers were shaped in large measure by the existence of “*dār al-islām*, a caliphate and a caliph.” That fact, in Dr. Fadl’s view, is a strong argument in favor of not blindly applying the ancestors’ answers to our present reality. Thus, when unqualified individuals in our days mistakenly believe that the opinions of the *salaf* are binding, they reveal their ignorance of the traditional way of giving a legal judgment (*fatwa*), which implies “the knowledge of that which is obligatory in a given situation” (*ma‘rifat al-wājib fi al-wāqi‘*).[31] Hence the cumulative approach.

This is a very important point because it leads Dr. Fadl to emphasize that *fiqh* has always been broadened to include new rules to meet the exigencies of the times; and this has implications for understanding why Muslims are no longer requested to perform the duty of *jihad* today, says Dr. Fadl. The criteria for performing armed *jihad* are the same as those for other religious duties: the Muslim must possess the ability (*qudra*) to do an act. [32] Arguing from this premise, Dr. Fadl underscores that the term “*qudra*” should not be taken literally here, as referring to the basic capacity for “bodily action” (*qudra badaniyya*), but rather more broadly in terms of all that is in one’s power or capacity, including “the circumstances surrounding the [duty] of *jihad*.”[33] The connotation behind this meaning is that God intends the believer “to choose the legal duty that most closely matches his situation and capability” (*al-munāsib li-wāqi‘ihi wa-qudratihi*).[34] Seeking to provide a solid basis for that interpretation, Dr. Fadl points to the Qur‘ān, where God praises those who chose “to fight on the path of God” (*al-mujāhidīn fi sabīl illāh*) as well as “the People of the Cave” (‘*ahl al-kaḥf*) who chose to hide to escape persecution.[35] In such cases, as Dr. Fadl puts it, believers were facing a threat posed by “a force of religious opponents” (*ḥashd min ‘l-mukhālifīn fi ‘l dīn*) but responded to the situation in different ways. However, Dr. Fadl has another, more important argument. That is, the example of pagan Mecca, where Muslims were not required to preach or fight *jihad*. To save them from greater harm in their disempowered environment, he asserts, God did not impose any duty of *jihad* on them before they undertook the *hijra* to Medina.[36] Dr. Fadl maintains that, in today’s world, this option is still effective, not canceled or abrogated (*ghayr mansūkh*). Meccan Muslims, like “Islamist groups in most Muslim countries today, tend to oscillate between impotence and disempowerment.”[37] Interestingly, a few years earlier Dr. Fadl had criticized opponents of offensive *jihad* as “halfway believers,” who were beset with doubts about their religion.[38] But he did, obviously, change his mind, because here he points to how Muslims must measure their own capacity and make choices based on both practical and religious dimensions of utility. He is critically alert, for instance, to the safety of Muslims if (or when) the enemy strikes again and to the ways in which offensive *jihad* invariably involves “encroachment upon the money and lives of the innocent ones” (*ma‘sumīn*), describing every such act as a “grave sin” (*kaḥbā‘ir al-dhunūb*).[39] We will return to this discussion below, but now, let us explain the importance of Dr. Fadl’s shift of focus from the later, Medinan period to the Meccan period when elucidating the reasons why military *jihad* should be suspended.

First, this shift testifies to the fact that Dr. Fadl takes his cue from premodern Salafis, such as Ibn Taymiyya, as much as from ideas offered by reformist writers, who demanded a return to the Meccan-phase of the Prophet’s career in order to retrieve “the original message of Islam.”[40] Secondly, for the purpose of this article, Dr. Fadl’s preference for Mecca is important because it helps us understand the rationale that leads him to condemn “the use of force in changing what is reprehensible” (*taghyīr al-munkar bi‘l yad*), including violent confrontation with government authorities in Muslim lands—(i.e., the near enemy)—in the pursuit of implementing shari‘a. [41] As we shall see in the next section, Dr. Fadl uses the same rationale, alongside the concept of the ‘public good’ (*maslaha*), to undermine the legality of waging armed *jihad* against the West (the far enemy).

Peace Promotion as a Means to Safeguard Islam and Muslims

The concept of the ‘public good’ (*maslaha*) used by Dr. Fadl to undermine the legality of armed jihad against local authorities also underlies his endeavor to rebut the arguments routinely presented in favor of Jihadist expansion into territories of *dar al-kufr* (“land of disbelief”). Dr. Fadl points out that the *raison d’être* of offensive jihad, as inferred from the Qur’ān, is the fighting of injustice with the aim of “promoting the religion” (*izhār al-dīn*). In his view, this can easily be inferred from God’s saying in the Qur’an [Q 8:39], a verse that jihadis normally read as a license to call for perpetual war against non-Muslim states: “And fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression and there prevail justice and faith in Allah.”[42] Dr. Fadl complicates the meaning of the verse, stressing that it was revealed in Medina when Muslims were in a favorable position. This enabled them to promote Islam in more forceful ways.[43] This is contrary to the contemporary situation where Muslims are barely able to defend themselves. Against this background, he emphasizes that the obligation to fight jihad is lifted if that is likely to “destruct [human] lives” (*halāk al-nufūs*) and “endanger Muslims” (*al-’idrār bi’l muslimīn*).[44] Instead, Dr. Fadl conceptualizes the promotion of religion as the ability to interpret the rules of the shari‘a and apply them to the present situation. He takes this argument further when he deals with another Qur’anic verse [Q 47: 35]: “...be not weak and ask not for peace, when you have the upper hand.” In Dr. Fadl’s view, this verse addresses the prohibition against “the acceptance of any terms of peace with the enemy” (*musālamat al-a’dā’*) when Muslims have the “upper hand” in response to aggression. For this reason, the rule proclaimed in the verse is circumscribed (*muqayyad*), not general or unrestricted.[45] Once again, the idea here is to avoid damage, rather than achieving a legally relevant benefit. This stance indicates important continuities with Ibn Taymiyya, who paved the way for similar (albeit more sophisticated) elaborations on the implementation of the shari‘a in accordance with the principle of *maslaha*; as, for instance, in this passage which contains remarkable similarities to the argument developed by the author of *RJA*:

The principle overall is that the *shari‘a* never neglects a benefit (*maslaha*) [...] One of two possibilities must obtain for the rational person who believes that something is a benefit even though the revelation does not mention it. Either the revelation indicates it and the person looking into it does not know it. Or it is not a benefit even though he believes it to be a benefit [...] Often people imagine that something is profitable in religion and in this world, when in fact its profit is outweighed by harm.[46]

Echoing here Ibn Taymiyya’s conception of *maslaha*, Fadl proposes the survival and the propagation of Islam through other means, instead of fighting, including these:[47]

- *da‘wa*, the practice of calling non-Muslims to Islam
- *hijra*, emigration to avoid persecution
- *‘uzla*, isolation by abstaining from ordering good and prohibiting evil (*al-’amr bi-l-ma‘rūf wa-l-naḥy ‘an al-munkar*)
- *‘afw*, forgiveness
- *al-safh wa’l i‘rād*, avoiding enemies
- *kitmān al-imān*, concealment of faith

Against this backdrop, Dr. Fadl offers a variety of clues that jihad is not the only legal means to correct deviation from the shari‘a. To illustrate his point, he goes on to provide examples of how the pious ancestors would choose “the legal option which was appropriate” (*al-khayār al-shar‘ī al-munāsib*) to the reality and circumstances in which they found themselves; for instance, by refraining from armed methods as was the case with the prophet’s companion Khalid b. al-Walid who decided that it was best to save his troops by retreating from the battlefield against the Byzantines at the north of Mu’ta or Areopolis (east of the Jordan River). The second example given by Dr. Fadl comes from another Qur’anic verse [Q 48:1], where God praises the peace agreement with the infidels of Quraysh, known as *sulh al-hudaybiyah*. According to Dr. Fadl, this verse uses a different word for “victory,” namely *fath*, the term normally used to designate Muslim conquests, even though the Prophet failed in seizing political power and consolidating it by force in pagan Mecca. On this basis, Dr. Fadl concludes that believers are not only permitted but also encouraged to enter international agreements/treaties (*mu‘āhadāt*) with non-Muslims, even in war time.[48] To underscore the primacy of the public good (or

well-being) over other commitments, including the principle of offensive jihad, Dr. Fadl also cites the Qur'anic verse [Q 8:61]: "But if they incline to peace, so shall you, and put your trust in Allah." In this way, he seems to nullify the notion of permanent warfare, thereby separating himself from Islamist ideologues who refuse to abide by international agreements. By adopting this position, which encourages obedience to state authority, Dr. Fadl seems to waver between being a political quietist and subscribing to the Sunni tradition's doctrine of *siyāsa shar'īyya*, which does not interpret religion in opposition to the prerogatives of the ruler, which include, inter alia, the right to declare jihad and conclude treaties with non-Muslims.

Preventing Harm Is a Benefit: Monarchy, Law, and Legitimacy in Morocco

In contrast to other Islamic countries, Morocco is a country, whose constitution declares the king as head of state and *Amir al-Mu'minīn* (Commander of the Faithful). Accordingly, Moroccan society is defined in a two-fold way, namely as an *umma* (community) in the religious sense and a nation in the modern political sense. The political power of the king as head of the state is territorial, i.e., confined to the territories of Morocco, whereas his religious power—or rather spiritual jurisdiction—is trans-territorial. Moroccans—Muslims and Jews—therefore, are both subjects of the king and citizens of the state.[49] As members of a spiritual *umma* and a political nation, Moroccans are governed by the oath of allegiance and by the constitution. A third dimension is added to the two powers of the monarch, namely a symbolic one. The latter derives from a combination of genealogical, historical, political, and spiritual attributes that the monarchy invests in what is called religious diplomacy and spiritual security. Now, the monarchy is branded as the kingdom of the friends of God (*mamlakat al-'awliyā'*) and adheres officially to three components of the Moroccan brand of Sunnism: the Maliki law school, the Ash'arite theological school (the middle path of theological creed) and the spiritualist tendency within Sufism represented by al-Junaid (d. 910).[50]

As we shall see in Abu Hafs' revisions, the question of the monarchy's legitimacy becomes one of the three prioritized questions discussed in this strand of revisionist literature. In a Moroccan context, the Jihadist position vis-a-vis the legitimacy of the existing oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*) toward the monarch became idolatrous or heretical on theological grounds. For example, in his short theological-juridical treatise, *On whoever seeks judgment of the tyrant rulers is a disbeliever*, the former Moroccan Jihadi ideologue Abdelkarim al-Shadhili, delineates that:

one of the requirements of Tawhid (the absolute sovereignty of God), whose meaning and identity features are no longer recognizable by [Muslim] people today, is that people seek to be governed by the law of God Almighty. The question of sovereignty (*hākimiyyah*) and legislation (*tashrī'*) are not matters of positive law (*'ahkām far'īyyah*) but matters relating to Tawhid and the foundation of belief. This is what is meant by *tawīd al-'uluhiyyah* (Tawhid of Godship), i.e., the individual is bound by worshipping God alone and being ruled by his Law.[51]

Thus, since the issue of the *hakimiyya* is a theological matter—inherent attribute of God's sovereignty—not an article of positive law, Jihadi Salafis raise two related issues, namely:

1. When should an Imam be considered legitimate?
2. Must Muslims obey a ruler who does not apply the *shari'a*?

These two questions have been a source of dispute among Moroccan Jihadists and have stood at the center of several debates among them in and outside Moroccan prisons, writes Abu Hafs in his revisions.[52] Through the cumulative approach of *maqāsid* jurisprudence, Abu Hafs presents a starting point for answering these questions by reference to Imam Malik (d. 796). On this basis, he proposes that the legitimacy of the monarchy—the eighth principle of his ten principles—should be decided not on theological grounds but on juridical ones, i.e., the objectives of the divine law.[53] Again, the underlying principle here is: *preventing Harm is a Benefit*. The latter logic modifies the maxim that *preserving harm takes precedence over preserving benefit*. Seen from the vantage point of Abu Hafs, therefore, there are two premises for renouncing armed jihad against the existing monarchy:

We [recanting Jihadists] clearly declare that even though we are among the advocates of the Rightly Guided Caliphate, we have no problem with the monarchy because a) the scholars of the *umma* since the Umayyad era until today have accepted this system of [governance] and pledged allegiance to it [to hear and obey], and b) as long as the monarch preserves religion, unite the *umma*, uphold security and prevent harmful conflicts (fitna).[54]

The methodology at play here is *ta'sīl shar'ī* [establishing the origin of laws] It is a process that aims at authenticating every creed or law through the lens of preventing harm and promoting benefit. In matters pertaining to acts of worship, according to Jihadi Salafism, this mode of authentication is not permissible, i.e., believers are not allowed to challenge the objectives of religious duties based on rational reflection. Abu Haf's ten arguments in support of the non-opposition to the monarchy are in congruence with the authentication methodology known in Maliki jurisprudence as the method of *sadd al-darā'i'* (prohibition of evasive legal devices). This method has a preemptive and deterrent function.[55] As an example of prohibition of evasive legal devices, Abu Haf's states that since:

it was decided by the jurists that preventing harm takes precedence over preserving benefit, then preventing the harm resulting from disobeying the ruler [by means of armed jihad] takes priority over preserving the benefits from the establishment of a shura-system. Ibn Battal—may God have mercy on him—said: The jurists have unanimously agreed that it is obligatory to obey the ruler—who took power by force—and accompany him in jihad campaigns, and that obedience to him is better than revolting against him. In doing so, we will prevent the shedding of blood and calm the agitators.[56]

Society and the Near Enemy

According to Abu Haf's description, the internal jihadi discussions in prison (in the period from 2004 to 2009), resulted in several revisions which culminated in 2009 with the so-called “initiative” (*al-mubādara*). The letter-document *Ansifuna* is the written expression of this initiative. It offers a window into the process of these discussions among the four chief sheiks on the one hand and between every sheikh and his own Jihadi followers on the other. It also offers a useful entry point for interrogating the religious premises upon which decisions are based regarding a) recanting violence, b) renouncing the doctrine of takfir (apostatizing), and c) accepting monarchical rule. In his description of these discussions and debates, Abu Haf's mentions two crucial earlier revisions which took place in the year 2004; that is, a year after the bloody attacks of May 16, 2003, in Casablanca. While the first document (“revisions”) was made public through the newspaper *al-Ayyam*—it was a response to a security report that was issued after a summit on terrorism in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2004. [57] In the words of Abu Haf's: “the importance of the document lies in the four sheikhs’ adopting a clear and explicit position regarding a number of sensitive issues...after a difficult and long labor.”[58] It is worth noting that in 2004, these four sheikhs came together in support of transnational Jihadi ideology, endorsing its goal of targeting the far enemy (i.e., the US and its allies). In particular,

the common point that brought together the sheikhs of the Jihadist movement and the followers of this current was the idea of the duty to support the global Jihadist cause and the Islamic State model brought about by the Taliban movement as well as al-Qaeda. They were also fascinated by Osama bin Laden as a model to be emulated. They viewed both the Taliban and bin Laden as spearheading the confrontation with American hegemony. [59]

The second document prepared by the four sheikhs was not made public, according to Abu Haf's. It was sent to the authorities in the form of a letter under the title “to whom it may concern,” proposing a way out of the crisis and how the Salafi Jihadist issue could be resolved. Interestingly, the four sheikhs proposed to play the role of mediators, i.e., they pledged to mediate with the global Jihadist movement to spare Morocco in all future operations or terrorist plans in exchange for the release of the Jihadi Salafist inmates. The Moroccan Jihadi returnees from Afghanistan had a personal relationship with these Jihadist groups and could intercede on behalf of the monarchy for Morocco to be spared.

Ignoring the first two documents, the security authorities took the decision to move the four sheikhs and send each of them to a prison close to the city where he lived before imprisonment. The letter-document *Ansifuna*, however, was made public from the local prison of Bourkayz, in Fez, in December 2010. It was the product of an initiative launched by the Consultative Council for Human Rights—a state institution—in coordination with the Al-Karama Human Rights Forum, an NGO close to the Islamic Justice and Development Party that later would lead the government for ten years (2011–2021). In this initiative, the Jihadist inmates outlined three principles, the subjects of which were structural and doctrinal revisions. It was meant as a negotiating paper mandating CCHR/al-Karama to negotiate their release with the monarchy.

Abu Hafs maintained that Islam is the religion of the “middle path” (*al-waatiyya*). However, he also emphasized that the monarchy in its existing form was the only institution that could guarantee the *umma*’s spiritual security and prevent it from falling victim to civil strife (*fitna*). He further held that pledging allegiance (*bay’ah*) to heed and obey (*al-sam’ wa al-tā’ah*) the monarch to prevent bloodshed and close the door of sedition correlates with recanting the doctrine of takfir (apostatizing) of Muslim societies because it contradicts the most important objective of the shari‘a, namely *preventing harm*.

Dismantling radical ideologies on the individual level goes together with resocialization of the person in question. Abu Hafs’ revisionist proposition is framed in line with his argumentation that answers a central question: *Why [should] we refrain from condemning Muslim societies as infidel?* This is, in fact, one of the ten principles put forward in *Ansifuna*. To these principles, Abu Hafs provides ten arguments in favor of not apostatizing Muslims. These follow a logic that begins with fearing God’s wrath in this world and in the next:

Out of fear of God Almighty, and out of fear from His severe punishment that awaits those who accuse one Muslim of unbelief (apostasy) imagine what the punishment would be like for those who accuse the whole society of Muslims of disbelief? In a hadith related by Bukhari, the prophet says: “Whoever accuses a believer of unbelief is like killing him.”[60]

Equating accusing a Muslim of disbelief with killing him or her according to this hadith raises the question: how should we consider the religious arguments used by the Jihadists in accusing Muslim societies of disbelief? Applying the *maqāsid* principle, i.e., the prohibition of evasive legal devices, would expose the religious argument of the Jihadists as heretical. This is exactly how Abu Hafs describes those who accuse an individual Muslim of apostasy, while attributing this ruling to God himself. In his view, fearing God and fearing His wrath might work as a deterrent. Moreover, the harm that results from such an accusation of unbelief, i.e., the disruption of the *umma*’s unity, is far greater than any benefit that might result from establishing an Islamic state. He cites another Maliki scholar, al-Qādi Iyyād, in support of this assertion: “The shedding of the blood of the monotheist worshippers is very dangerous.” The rectifying force in Abu Hafs’ revisionist attempt is the fact that the universality of Islam derives from the objectives of the law, according to the founding father of the *maqāsid* jurisprudential methodology, al-Shatibi (d. 1388):

The rulings of the Law encompass a universal interest, as well as a particular interest peculiar to each specific case. The particular interest is indicated by each piece of evidence as it relates to this or that case or circumstance; as for the universal interest, it is for every human being to be answerable to some specific precept of the Law in all of his movements, words and beliefs. Otherwise, he remains like a dumb beast left to roam at will until he is reined in by the Law.[61]

In conclusion, Abu Hafs proceeds in his revisions to answer two key questions:

1. Who are we?
2. What do we agree on?

As an answer to these questions, Abu Hafs states:

We are a group of Islamist inmates in the case that is now known as the “Salafi Jihadist” case. Even though we were not organized in any organization—clandestine or public—we ended up in detention together suffering from unjust sentencing. We do agree on several beliefs, and we share a great deal of principles, which we gather

in these points. We also consider these points the foundation of this initiative and the primary conditions for anyone desiring to join it.[62]

In this sense, accepting the monarchical system and recanting apostatizing society undermines the very Jihadist argument on the obligation of jihad against the ‘near enemy’, i.e., Muslim societies. In the Moroccan case, the monarchy’s political theology—the king’s role as both commander of the faithful and a head of state—has made it difficult for Jihadi Salafism to gain ground on Moroccan soil. This may also have been one of the reasons why most Moroccan radicals opted for transnational jihad.

Conclusion

The revisions of Dr. Fadl and Abu Hafs can be viewed as two different examples of religious deradicalization, disengagement and reconciliation. Dr. Fadl’s revisions provide a juridical argument against the use of armed jihad and the theology of takfir, with the aim of highlighting the senselessness of armed confrontation with both the near and the far enemy. Similarly, Abu Hafs’ revisions provide a practical demonstration of the important role that religion *can*—and perhaps *must*—play in any deradicalization process.[63] In the two cases we explored here, the religious argument based on *maqāsid al-shari‘a*, and its ethical philosophy focus on preemptive and deterrent aspects in the reconciliation process, and in so doing emphasizes ideological change as a key to behavioral change. What does this imply for deradicalization research? In combination with many of the variables pointed out in the existing literature, such as the role of “family (kinship responsibilities) and integration into the community” [64] or psychological factors such as “disillusionment” and “burnout” [65], ideological transformation might have an important and influential role to play for the development and outcome of the deradicalization process since it can help militants to find new ways and means of construing and legitimating their conception of religion in a nonconfrontational manner. For militants engaged in deradicalization programs, this could contribute to their efforts to abandon violence in the name of ‘jihad’.

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Notes

[1] The two Arabic revisions (*murāj‘āt*) that the present article deals with are: Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, *Tarshid Al-‘amal al-Jihadi* (Rationalizing Jihadist Action in Egypt and the World), 2007; URL: <http://www.jihadica.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/05/tarshid-al-jihad.pdf>, and Abu Hafs Mohamed Abdelwahhab Rafiqi, *Ansifuna* (Be fair to us). (Fez: 2010). It is noteworthy that the story of how these two texts/revisions came about is quite similar: both were written within the confines of prison.

[2] In the case of the Moroccan brand of Islam and its trans-territorial religious diplomacy in countering transnational Jihadism on the African continent, see Cédric Bayloq and Aziz Hlaoua, “Spreading a Moderate Islam? Morocco’s New African Religious Diplomacy,” *Afrique Contemporaine* 257(1), 2016, pp. 113–128. By opting for the cumulative approach, our two former Salafi Jihadists break with the “restorative approach”, which consists of the purist Salafi belief that God has given mankind the entire law in the Qur‘an and the Sunna. Through the cumulative approach, the hermeneutical methodology of jurisprudential epistemology consists of engaging human agency by means of human reason and revelation in a consistent and continuous search for the *shari‘a*’s universal objectives within the constraints of history and based on the necessities of human life.

[3] Ahmad Al-Raysuni, *Fiqh Al-Thawrah: Murāja‘āt Fī al-Fiqh al-Siyyasī al-‘islāmī*. (Cairo: Dar al-Kalimah, 2013); Mohamed Misbah, *Moroccan Jihadis*. (Doha: Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 2021); Bilal Telidi, “Advocacy and Politics in Winning the Islamic Movement Over: A formative and Systemic Approach.” *Awaser* (11), 2021, pp. 33–65.

[4] Ahmad Al-Raysuni, *Imam al-Shatibi’s Theory of the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law*. (London-Washington: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2005, p. 231).

- [30] Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, 2007, op. cit., p. 5.
- [31] Ibid.
- [32] Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, 2007, op. cit., p. 7.
- [33] Ibid.
- [34] Ibid.
- [35] Sura 18 of the Qur'an.
- [36] Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, 2007, op. cit., p. 8.
- [37] Ibid.
- [38] Sayed Khatib, *Understanding Islamic Fundamentalism: The Theological and Ideological Basis*. (Cairo-New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2011, p. 152).
- [39] Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, 2007, op. cit., p. 10.
- [40] Clinton Bennett, *Studying Islam: The Critical Issues*. (London-New York: Continuum, 2010, p. 86).
- [41] Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, 2007, op. cit., p. 9.
- [42] Qur'an, Sura 2, verse 193.
- [43] Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, 2007, op. cit., p. 12.
- [44] Ibid.
- [45] Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, 2007, op. cit., p. 14.
- [46] Hoover, Jon (2019) *Ibn Taymiyya*. (London: Oneworld Academic, 2019, p. 59).
- [47] Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, 2007, op. cit., p. 15.
- [48] Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, 2007, op. cit., p. 14.
- [49] The question of the borders of the kingdom of Morocco is still a problematic issue since Morocco still does not recognize the present borders as the kingdom's historical borders. Morocco still considers Spain's presence in the two enclaves Ceuta and Melilla as part of a colonial agenda. Another example of unsolved border conflicts is the one between Morocco and Algeria, regarding the control of western (Moroccan) Sahara. Morocco is de facto still in the process of decolonization. Traditionally, both political and military forms of decolonization are considered forms of jihad. In this connection, it is interesting that al-Qaeda's leader Ayman Zawahiri has recently issued a threat to Spain because of these two enclaves. See "Al-Zawahiri calls for the liberation of Ceuta and Melilla", *Middle East in 24*; URL: <https://middleeast.in-24.com/world/470987.html>.
- [50] The latest branding of this interesting political-theological concept is the documentary *mamlakat al- 'awliya'* that Medi TV has produced; cf. URL: <https://youtu.be/5CKNQvXIyY>; see also Cédric Bayloq and Aziz Hlaoua, 2016, op. cit., pp. 113–128.
- [51] Abdelkarim al-Shadili, *Fasl al-maqāl fī 'anna man tahkama 'ilā al-tāgūt mina al-hukkām kāfir min ghayr juhūd wa 'istilāl*. Manbar al-Tawhid wal-Jihad. 2001, p. 2; URL: <https://ketabpedia.com/ن-م-ت-و-غ-ا-ط-ل-ا-ي-ل-ا-م-ك-ا-ح-ت-ن-م-ن-أ-ي-ف-ل-ا-ق-ب-ل-ل-ص-ف-ل-ي-م-ح-ت/>. Genre-wise this treatise belongs to a juridical-theological (or rather: a polemical response) category called preventing all ambiguities regarding the creed of the Salaf. It is well known that the Wahhabi school inspired by Ibn A. Wahhab (d. 1792), still constitutes the authoritative reference in almost all variants of Salafism—both the quietist and Jihadist. Inspired by Wahhabi teachings, Salafis reject human reason as a source of validation and accept only the doctrines and beliefs inherited from the Prophet's companions and their pious followers. They do not adhere to the jurisprudential school of *maqāsid* and its ethical philosophy.
- [52] Abu Hafs Mohamed Abdelwahhab Rafiqi, 2010, op. cit., 3. In this video, Abu Hafs—together with the other former sheikhs of Moroccan Jihadism—explains the reasons and nature of his revisions after his release: cf. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZVkJMkc-YuI>. Our focus in this article on Abu Hafs' revisions is due to the fame that these have gained in both Moroccan Jihadi circles and with the public at large. Moroccan media considers Abu Hafs as one of the so-called (in the Moroccan media) "four sheikhs", namely: Mohammed El-Fezazi, Omar El-Haddoushi, Hassan El-Kettani, and Mohammed Abdul Wahab Rafiqi. Abu Hafs mentions the other three sheikhs as co-signatories of these and previous revisions. Regarding these four sheikhs' fame, the moral authority they still have over a number of "followers", and their influence through the social media—and presence in the public media, see URL: [intelligentcia.maroc](https://www.intelligentcia.maroc/)—برغم أن أي سن جلتنا—فإننا مثلنا قولنا أمة حارة مديقت: نوجسنا لخداتنا عجارنا. Abu Hafs affirms that all these contexts made him a Salafi "sheikh"—he sees that the only transformation he made in his life was freeing himself from all the molds that had crept in, and his journey toward a free thought that is not bound by any particular ideology. Abu Hafs states that he has not yet written a book reviewing all these transformations and laying the foundations of the intellectual construction that he is promoting today, especially as he works on dismantling the categories of the Salafi Jihadist discourse. He

critically makes the point vis-à-vis his 2010 revisions that it is possible to trace the path and development of his ideas by comparing what is presented today with the entire Salafi edifice, and by following his articles, radio and television programs, and his interventions in conferences and seminars.

[53] On pages 13–15, Abu Hafis gives a list of ten clauses, and for each clause—a subject of revisions—he provides ten arguments. The clause number eight that interests us here explores the reason why believers should not oppose the monarchical system.

[54] Abu Hafis Mohamed Abdelwahhab Rafiqi, 2010, op. cit., p. 14.

[55] For a more realistic evaluation of how successful the Moroccan deradicalization programs of more than 3000 jihadists were, one could see the testimonies of some of them in the latest documentary of May 2021; URL: <https://youtu.be/Rfogi2N6CnA>. It needs to be said that even the state's "reconciliation" program, launched in 2017, was directed at individual cases and was not a negotiation with an organized movement, especially after the divisions in prisons in the absence of a unified Salafi Jihadist leadership. Among the most successful individual stories one finds the story of Abu Hafis, the author and initiator of the first revisionist experience in Morocco. To be sure, not all those who went through deradicalization programs proved to be successfully deradicalized. An earlier documentary about *al-muālaah* (reconciliation), which dates back to 2017, gives examples of such failed cases: cf. URL: <https://youtu.be/Rfogi2N6CnA>. Two well-known examples are two former Salafi Jihadists: Sheikh Omar El-Heddoushi and sheikh Hasan El-Kettani. Since their release from prison by the king's pardon, they have both said that they have no intention of reviewing any of their positions and that they will not change their convictions. El-Kattani still describes democracy as a "secular system that is not suitable for Muslims." He also called on former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi to use deterrence and punishment against his opponents. He does not stop describing his old friend, Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab Rafiqi, as "relapsed" in reference to his reviews. He further accuses him of being a hypocrite (*munāfiq*) and ignorant (*jāhil*), employing the entire Salafi dictionary of slander and defamation: cf. URL: <https://youtu.be/dviJPddJ3g0>. Omar El-Haddouchi continues to declare since leaving prison that he has not changed any of his ideas, and that he has not revised anything he believed in: "I like to be imprisoned and die for my ideas. I have nothing to back down from." He repeatedly refused to talk about any reviews. It appears from Omar El-Haddoushi's declared positions, that he has not actually revised any of his ideas. He is still calling for the application of the shari'a with the same Jihadist vision, and he still uses terms such as "tyrants" and "affliction" in sermons directed at young people. In fact, El-Haddoushi does not hide his sympathy with the Syrian-based group Jabhat al-Nusra and denounces those who describe the "Mujahideen" as terrorists. Also, his stances on democracy have not changed, and he still describes it as a form of idol worship, and he does not stop launching campaigns against what he calls "secularists" and "fools".

[56] Abu Hafis Mohamed Abdelwahhab Rafiqi, 2010, op. cit., 34. On this point, see Ahmed al-Raysuni, 2005, op. cit.

[57] Regarding the terrorist attacks of Casablanca on May 16, 2003, the timing of the explosions and the high number of the perpetrators initially led the authorities to believe that it was an act hatched and carried out by an international network because of the astonishing similarities between the Casablanca attacks and those that took place in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia three days before.

[58] Abu Hafis Mohamed Abdelwahhab Rafiqi, 2010, op. cit., p. 3.

[59] Mohamed Misbah, *Moroccan Jihadis*. (Doha: Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 2021, p. 90).

[60] Abu Hafis Mohamed Abdelwahhab Rafiqi, 2010, op. cit., 31.

[61] Abu Ishaq Ibrahim al-Shāibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī 'uūl al-sharī'ah*. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al ilmiyah, 2004, p. 451).

[62] Abu Hafis Mohamed Abdelwahhab Rafiqi, 2010, op. cit., 13.

[63] Kate Barrelle, "Pro-Integration: Disengagement from and Life after Extremism," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 7 (2), 2015, pp. 129–142; Adrian Cherney & Emma Belton (2021) "The Evaluation of Case-managed Programs Targeting Individuals at Risk of Radicalisation," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2021, pp. 1–20. Lorne L. Dawson offers a convincing analysis of "the explanatory value of religious motivational claims" (...) and "their constructive role" (...) in advancing our grasp of the exact nature of the actions of religious terrorists (pp. 2–3) in: "Bringing Religiosity Back In: Critical Reflections on the Explanation of Western Homegrown Religious Terrorism (Part 1)." *Perspectives on Terrorism* (Vol. 15, Issue 1), February 2021, pp. 2–16.

[64] Daniel Koehler, *Understanding Deradicalization: Methods, Tools and Programs for Countering Violent Extremism*. (New York: Routledge, 2016, p. 46).

[65] Disley, Emma, Kristin Weed, Anais Reding, Lindsay Clutterbuck, and Richard Warnes, *Individual disengagement from al-Qaeda-influenced terrorist groups: A Rapid Evidence Assessment to inform policy and practice in preventing terrorism*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012. URL: https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR785.html.