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## Not in My Name

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## **ABSTRACT**

In exploring discourse regarding religious groups, the term 'radical' comes up frequently. Furthermore the term 'radical' comes up relative to both ideas and groups. Although it may be presumed that groups or individuals who are radical are so because they embody an ideology defined as such, this is not always the case. The "Not In My Name" social movement is called radical because it stands opposite to the ideology held by ISIS. This debate though, for once, does not exist on a spectrum; there is no 'extreme right' and 'extreme left'. Through past examples of similar situations and scholarly analogy it will be shown that ISIS is radical because it has a desire to return to a fundamental root system. Not In My Name, in contrast, is not advocating a change, only a disassociation of the name of Islam with ISIS. Due to the contrast between the two groups it will also be discussed whether public declaration of allegiance should be required, or if allegiance should be assumed until proven otherwise.

## **KEYWORDS**

Islam

ISIS

Not In My Name

Radical

Religion

Politics

A recent movement, called 'Not In My Name', which is in reaction to Islamic State of Iraq and [Levant] Syria (hereafter referred to as 'ISIS'), has arisen. Naturally then, to understand 'Not In My Name' a brief overview of ISIS must be given. It will become clear that ISIS is radical, but the question is whether this other movement is as well. I will argue that 'Not In My Name' is a distancing effort and a condemnation but it is not radical. Examples of similar movements, in reaction to fundamentalism, over the course of history will be given; and the two groups (ISIS and 'Not In My Name') will be related to concepts presented in various scholarly works. There are many sects of Islam throughout history but for the purposes of this essay discourse will mostly refer to Sunni and Shia. Sunni is often described as the orthodox branch of Islam, whereas Shia has a different understanding of the law and rejects the first three caliphs that are accepted within Sunni.

The Khawarij, an early ages Islamic rebel group who were responsible for the assassination of the fourth caliph (circa 661 CE), has been referred to as the "first ISIS"; or more accurately some scholars have said that ISIS is a modern-day Khawarij. This isn't entirely true since ISIS members are Sunni, and Sunnis were separate and distinct from the Khawarij. ISIS was originally the Iraqi division of Al-Qaeda- an Islamic extremist organization that was given "terrorist" designation by the United Nations, North American Treaty Organization, European Union, USA... and others. When Al-Qaeda was allegedly destroyed, so much focus had been placed upon them that much of the world had failed to see the numerous rebel groups within it. Al- Qaeda, ISIS, and Jaysh Rijal al- Tariqa al- Naqshbandia (hereafter referred to as JRTN) are all anti-government rebel groups in the Arabian world with an Islamic base, and they have all used the conflict between Shia and Sunni to further their cause. To this point much of popular media has been written from a Shia perspective and puts Sunnis in an unfavorable light- there are

websites however devoted to the Sunni perspective that make an interesting read. Sunnis are a minority in Iraq but were led to believe, under the rule of Saddam Hussein, that they were the majority. As a result, radical Sunnis believe that they are under- represented in government and want to establish a caliphate, which is an Islamic political- religious leadership paradigm based on the succession of Muhammad. This is the main difference between ISIS and JRTN, JRTN wants an Islamic dictatorship, and caliphs are not necessarily dictators. When Iraq's government was disbanded, many former soldiers were recruited as ISIS fighters. Al-Qaeda denounced connection with ISIS when it was determined that they were "too radical", an ironic statement coming from a group that is considered radical themselves. A similar sentiment was expressed by Adolf Hitler in his feelings towards Alfred Rosenberg, despising him for his pseudo- religious writing *Myth of the Twentieth Century*, calling him "a narrow minded Baltic German" and saying his work was "a relapse into medieval notions!"<sup>1</sup> ISIS has taken control of large portions of Northern and Western Iraq, as well as regions of Syria. It follows an interpretation of Islamic law derived from the Qu'ran, the life of Muhammad and scholarly Islamic rulings, it is referred to commonly as Sharia law. The leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, now goes by the name Al-Khalifah Ibrahim which sounds suspiciously like Caliph Abraham. Near the end of June 2014, ISIS announced their supposed caliphate, making Al- Khalifah (Al-Baghdadi) leader of all Muslims in the world. As an organization ISIS has killed thousands of civilians, forced entire cities to choose between conversion to Islam (their interpretation) and death, and has- as of November 16<sup>th</sup> 2014, carried through on threats of five executions of Westerners.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Speer, Albert. *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs by Albert Speer*. 96. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1970

<sup>2</sup> "ISIS Fast Facts." CNN. November 17, 2014. Accessed November 25, 2014.

‘Not In My Name’ is a recent movement in reaction to and against ISIS, and in general Jihadism (Islamic extremists). The phrase is used to effectively state that the radicals are operating under warped motives and goals and that the mass Muslim public do not want to be associated with terrorism.<sup>3</sup> Social media sites were filled with the hashtag “#notinmyname” on October 22<sup>nd</sup> when the shootings on Parliament Hill in Ottawa occurred, again to distance the Muslim identity from terrorism. As the main goal is a distancing, it could be argued that it is an ideological movement rather than “the other extreme” or a reconstruction of Islam. The Muslims using the phrase are not changing their own practices, or even the practices of ISIS- they are simply not permitting “Muslim” to become synonymous with “terrorist”. It does do more than simply distance individuals from jihadi ideology however, the movement is also a condemnation of the activities of ISIS, acting as an informal type of excommunication.

As mentioned earlier, in the early history of Islam there was a group called the Khawarij; in contrast to the Sunni and Shia, they originally were on board with Ali, the fourth caliph, but then turned against him because they saw a decision of his as rejecting the Qu’ran; and eventually he was murdered. The opposition to this group resulted in the first Islamic Civil War.<sup>4</sup> Later on in Islamic history, and recently in ours, the Al-Qaeda controversy came to the global stage with the rule of Osama Bin Laden. Al-Qaeda, surprisingly, has honorable beginnings; it was formed to support Muslims fighting against the Soviet Union- when the Soviets left, Al Qaeda continued to oppose non-Islamic presence within Islamic countries and revised their goals to be more power-seeking and purification driven. It was then that it turned into the radical organization composed of rebel factions we know today with an entirely Sunni population.

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<sup>3</sup> "Syrian Sheikh Condemns ISIS." CNN. November 17, 2014. Accessed December 3, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Esposito, John L., ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Despite the fact that Sunnis are a minority in Iraq they created a powerful government. There was uproar in response to Al-Qaeda when the infamous terrorist attacks on 9/11 were carried out. An unfortunate stereotype rose out of the rubble propagating that all Muslims were terrorists; this was one of the more modern sparks for “Not In My Name”-esque movements to be created. It was an effort to prevent innocent Muslims from being persecuted by those uninformed or misinformed about Muslim politics in the Middle East.<sup>5</sup>

One of the issues raised in the effort against ISIS is their treatment of women, for instance their orders for all women in a certain region between the ages of 11 and 46 to undergo genital mutilation. They also have a general disregard for females, forcing some women into sex-slave brothels. This has caused the “Not In My Name” movement to go beyond religious boundaries and be used in activities against gender- discriminatory violence. In layman’s talk this would be like a man saying that other men are not truly men if they are violent with women, or “not in the name of men”. Whether or not it is the original usage, people have bought into the association; a simple search on twitter for #notinmyname will bring up tweets regarding the war, violence against women, and sometimes usages that don’t really make sense. Some people are using the hashtag to condemn the movement for “allowing” the US to attack Raqqa, a city in Syria where ISIS has control. The tagline has also been used outside of Islamic politics as well. One statement made by Heath Franklin on November 29<sup>th</sup> related the disparity between common Islam and terrorism by saying the following: “Saying halal certification funds terrorism is like claiming Christmas funds the Westboro Baptist Church”<sup>6</sup>. The Westboro Baptist Church is an independent, fundamentalist Baptist church based in Kansas; members hold protests against

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<sup>5</sup> “Al-Qaeda (Islamic Militant Organization). “Encyclopedia Britannica Online. 2014. Accessed December 4, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Franklin, Heath. "#thinkplease." Twitter. November 29, 2014. Accessed December 5, 2014.

military funerals, are responsible for the “God hates Fags” slogan, and more. Their label as a “church”, and their usage of biblical reasoning has caused an association with Christianity, much like ISIS is associated with Islam. Christians though, from a variety of denominational backgrounds, have condemned their activities saying things along the lines of “they aren’t true Christians”. This lack of “trueness” is the same mentality expressed by Muslims in France when Hervé Gourdel was kidnapped and beheaded.<sup>7</sup> The Westboro Baptist Church is one example of the earlier type of person “uninformed about Muslim politics” who have type casted all Muslims as terrorists- they have even gone so far as to burn copies of the Qu’ran on the anniversary of 9/11.<sup>8</sup> The Israeli- Palestinian conflict also caused the phrase to be raised when Jewish citizens all around the world opposed the harming of Palestinians by Zionists- a Jewish group determined to establish a Jewish state, a goal eerily similar to that of ISIS. A statement has been made by Suzanne Weiss, on behalf of mainstream Judaism that: “we believe that ‘never again’ the often-repeated lesson of Hitler’s Holocaust, must mean ‘never again for anyone!’ - especially the Palestinians”.<sup>9</sup>

Now that several examples of this type of condemnatory and ex-communicating social movements have been given, the movements will be related to concepts raised in various scholarly works.

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<sup>7</sup> "Not in My Name." Paris Daily Photo. September 27, 2014. Accessed December 5, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Sims, Paul. "Qur'an Burning? Been There, Done That, Say Westboro Baptist Church." The Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science. September 10, 2010. Accessed December 6, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Weiss, Suzanne. "Not In My Name: Condemning the Massacre of Palestinians in Gaza: Statement of Jewish Holocaust Survivors." Global Research. August 16, 2014. Accessed December 6, 2014. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/not-in-my-name-condemning-the-massacre-of-palestinians-in-gaza-statement-of-jewish-holocaust-survivors/5396248>.

In large excerpts from *Al Farabi: The Political Writings- Selected Aphorisms and Other Texts* Al Farabi speaks of two different ruler paradigms; that of the just ruler, and that of the ignorant ruler. ISIS, through their caliphate, is following the latter ruler paradigm.

If his rulership is ignorant, then in what he prescribes he seeks only to obtain, for himself by means of them, one of the ignorant goods- either necessary good, that is, health and bodily well-being; or wealth; or pleasure; or honour and glory; or conquest- to win that good, be happy with it to the exclusion of them, and make those under his rulership tools he uses to arrive at his purpose and to retain in his possessions.<sup>10</sup>

ISIS seeks only to obtain those ignorant goods identified by Al-Farabi; and they obtain them through the exploitation and abuse of those under their rulership.

In contrast, Bartoleme de las Casas in *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account* recalls when Christianity was the corrupt religious group in the public eye, he says: “The reason for killing and destroying such an infinite number of souls is that the Christians have an ultimate aim, which is to acquire gold, and to swell themselves with riches in a very brief time and thus rise to a high estate disproportionate to their merits”<sup>11</sup> It speaks to the idea that we don’t call all Christians evil for what a select group did in the past, so why should the actions of ISIS, or Al Qaeda, or any other radical rebel group be held as representative of Islam. ‘Not In My Name’, makes clear the pluralism of interpretation- even without radicals like ISIS, there are still different ways to interpret both the Quran and history- which is why the different sects of Islam exist, much like most mainstream religions have sects and denominations: Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism to name a few.

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<sup>10</sup> Al-Farabi. “Book of Religion”. In *Exploring Religion: A Reader*. ed, William Acres. 51. Don Mills: Oxford University Press. 2014.

<sup>11</sup> De las Casas, Bartoleme. “The Devastation of the Indies”. In *Exploring Religion: A Reader*. ed, William Acres. 72. Don Mills: Oxford University Press. 2014.



The chapter on radicals in *Exploring Religion: A Reader*, has directly applicable material since it deals with the ideology at hand, and includes excerpts from a work authored by Sayyid Qutb, a man who may have indirectly influenced ISIS. The chapter introduces the concept with the following analogy: “they wish to tear out the existing system root and branch, and completely replace it with something else... seeking purity and a return to a purer model found in the past... using religion to stop the ills of their age.”<sup>12</sup> The first part of this quote clearly defines the actions and ideas of ISIS as radical. The second and last part of this quote relates to both ISIS and the “not in my name” movement. ISIS sees the ‘ills of the age’ to be a corrupt government; and uses a violent, and corrupt interpretation of their religion to cleanse society. The Not In My Name movement, in contrast, sees ISIS to be the ‘ill of the age’, and uses their interpretation to condemn ISIS and cleanse the name of Islam. Sayyid Qutb’s story is relatively similar to that of Al- Qaeda, and ISIS. He was a Muslim radical who, rather than following the wishes of the people who invested in his Westernization, decided to return to a “core Islam” instead. He saw major flaws, not compatible with Islam, in Western civilization; unfortunately he also decided the answer was violent revolt rather than peaceful advocacy. This relates to the current situation in two ways: violent revolt is the chosen path of ISIS; peaceful advocacy is the chosen path of ‘Not In My Name’. The main difference being that ‘Not In My Name’ is advocating on behalf of the majority of Muslims, whereas most advocacy issues are with minorities- one of the very motives of the various Sunni rebel groups is that they are an underrepresented minority. One could even argue that Sayyid Qutb’s words influenced ISIS, since they influenced Al Qaeda

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<sup>12</sup> Acres, William. *Exploring Religion: A Reader*. 143. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2014.

through Osama Bin Laden reading them, and as has already been mentioned- ISIS was once part of Al-Qaeda.<sup>13</sup>

ISIS is not nationalistic, rather it seeks to transcend national boundaries, the caliphate established in June of this year, in the eyes of ISIS, gives its leader authoritative power over the entire world's Muslims. A large portion of the world though is stating their rejection of the caliphate, along with the values of ISIS, which is a significant part of the reasoning behind the 'Not In My Name' movement. Theodore Herzl, in writing *The Jewish State*, explains the mentality behind Zionism. Ironically the desire for a Jewish state came from a history of persecution, wanting to distance themselves, or at least find a place to call their own without persecution.<sup>14</sup> Some say 'the best defence is a good offence', and this is the mentality that Zionist extremists have taken towards Palestinians, to defend their perceived state of Jews, they have to actively persecute the "invader". Zionism then, began as a distancing movement in the sense that they wanted to be left alone by persecutors who were informed only with stereotypes- but then evolved into being the persecutor themselves.

Exploration of politics and religion can shed light on why the ISIS controversy has sparked the need for people to distance themselves, these two social institutions are intimately intertwined. Talal Asad, in *Genealogies of Religion*, states that for "for these twentieth-century anthropologists, religion is not an archaic mode of scientific thinking, nor of any other secular endeavour we value today... the essence of religion is not to be confused with, say, politics."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Qutb, Sayyid. "Milestones". In *Exploring Religion: A Reader*. ed, William Acres. 159-66. Don Mills: Oxford University Press. 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Herzl, Theodore. "The Jewish State". In *Exploring Religion: A Reader*. ed, William Acres. 186-90. Don Mills: Oxford University Press. 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Asad, Talal. "Genealogies of Religion". In *Exploring Religion: A Reader*. ed, William Acres. 210-11. Don Mills: Oxford University Press. 2014

He does admit that in many societies they overlap and are intertwined, but this is an oversimplification, religion and politics in many situations are intimately linked in ways that they affect each other. A religious statement is a political statement; and political decrees can and do affect religious institutions. ISIS exemplifies one way for politics to be so religiously ruled that it is impossible to separate the two- politics is the formal way of regulating life; religion implemented in this way, becomes the determining regulator. 'Not In My Name' also becomes political, as numerous world leaders- religious and otherwise, step forward to say they do not condone the actions of ISIS.

Mary Wangila brings the controversial topic of female circumcision into light from the perspective of Kenyan women. As mentioned earlier ISIS has decreed that a vast number of women be circumcised. This decree is not a 'friendly suggestion' and I believe it can be fairly speculated that ISIS will have no qualms with using force if anybody opposes it. In Wangila's writing; *Female Circumcision*, one of the women interviewed explains that some Muslims interpret female circumcision to be an 'Islamic injunction', which is why "religious leaders have the obligation to stop this practice".<sup>16</sup> This speaks to the repeated notion in recent news that it can't just be everyday Muslim citizens who join the 'Not In My Name' movement, but leaders must speak out as well and condemn ISIS. Later in the same *Exploring Religion: A Reader* as mentioned earlier states that: "What was once local is now discussed and known globally. The view of religion as wholly sacred or separate from contemporary concerns is only achieved at the cost of ignoring the mindsets and practices of billions of people."<sup>17</sup> This quote perfectly encapsulates why this paper and discussion can happen at all. I am not a Muslim, nor do I live in

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<sup>16</sup> Wangila, Mary. "Female Circumcision: The Interplay of Religion, Culture, and Gender in Kenya". In *Exploring Religion: A Reader*. 254. Don Mills: Oxford University Press. 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Acres, 241

an area of the world controlled by ISIS. I am not in personal contact with anybody (that I know of) that is an active member of the 'Not In My Name' movement. Never the less I am able to know details regarding the situation.

Does though, the 'Not In My Name' movement in the media correspond to values on the ground? Logically, since it is the 'name of Islam' at risk, if the values it held were only Muslim values then it would stay within Muslim circles. It has not stayed within those circles though; it has gone above and beyond, to relate on the grounds of values to other people seemingly not affected. It is a hot button topic on Linked In's "Sociology of Religion" group<sup>18</sup>; and even the Pope has issued statements regarding the situation.<sup>19</sup> Ben Affleck, a popular American actor, defends Islam against overarching comments made by Sam Harris on the *Real Time with Bill Maher* show. While both acknowledge that there are Islamophobic bigots in existence, and that there is a need to criticize 'bad ideas', Sam Harris goes on to say that Islam is the 'mother-load of bad ideas' and that every criticism is being labeled as Islamophobic. The comments become reflexive as saying Islam is the 'mother-load of bad ideas' is exactly the prejudiced stereotyping on the basis of 'a few bad eggs'.<sup>20</sup> Megan Sass, in an article, begs the somewhat satiric question:

Are we not capable of understanding the difference between a friendly Muslim and a scary Muslim unless they walk around with a badge saying, 'Not with ISIS!'?... maybe, just maybe, the world would be a better place if we all walked around with just a little more shame based on the actions of other people we can't control.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "Is Islam Compatible With Human Rights?" LinkedIn: World's Largest Professional Network. December 3, 2014. Accessed December 5, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Hooper, John. "Pope Francis: Isis Violence against Minorities in Iraq Must Be Stopped." The Guardian. August 10, 2014. Accessed December 7, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> *Real Time with Bill Maher: Debate Radical Islam*. Performed by Bill Maher, Ben Affleck, Sam Harris, Michael Steele, Nicholas Kristof. United States of America: HBO, 2014. Film.

<sup>21</sup> Sass, Megan. "What Rabbi Shmuley Doesn't Seem To Understand About Ben Affleck Not Understanding Islam - Heeb." Heeb. October 15, 2014. Accessed December 5, 2014.

She raises a good point; should people have to publicly declare their disassociation for it to be known, or in some cases like ISIS, is it a distinction the public should have enough sense to make on their own. Sadly, I would argue that the stereotyping that went on after 9/11 is evidence enough that a public declaration needs to be made- even if it shouldn't have to be.

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