Research Article

A Conceptual Framework of Salafi Radicalization: An Underlying Theme and its Enablers

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Abstract | The religion-invoking violent extremism called "radical Islam" has become a global threat. In particular, a form of Sunni Muslim radicalism called Salafi radicalism—embraced by jihadist groups such as al Qaeda, the Taliban, and the Islamic State—has gained prominence. What role religious leaders play in causing this phenomenon is not well understood. To address this issue, I outline a novel theoretical framework for conceptualizing Salafi radicalism in terms of an underlying theme and its enablers. This proposal further divides radicalization processes into primary and secondary ones; the former are identified with the onset of radicalization in a community, and the latter develop in communities with longstanding exposure to the phenomenon. A new analysis of a 2013 Pew Research Center report suggests that sharia's popularity in a community can make religious leaders and their radical ideas highly influential, while in communities where sharia has little influence, religious leaders and their radical ideas likewise lack influence. This article suggests the following primary explanation of the phenomenon: backed by the prestige and resources of Saudi Arabia, religious leaders have popularized the appealing theme of sharia as all-encompassing "divine law" to advance radical Islamist agendas. By identifying sharia as the theme and religious leaders as its enablers, such an explanation facilitates our understanding of the causes and backers of this religious radicalism.

Introduction

The rapid pace of globalization—encouraged by mass high-speed international travel and information and communication technologies like radio, movies, television, and the Internet—has led to the emergence of fast-spreading new phenomena at the global scale. The threat of violent Muslim radicalism falls into this category. Undoubtedly, what constitutes "radical Islam" is a matter of debate among scholars (Ilyas 2013). This article confines itself to associating radical Islam with those around the globe who have embraced the aspirations of Salafi (Sunni) violent ideological organizations such as al Qaeda or the Islamic State (Hamid and Dar 2016).

The word "*salaf*" is Arabic for "ancient one." Salafism is a religious practice that strives to go back to Islam's earliest roots. The global Salafi jihadist movement began to take shape only in the 1990s (Livesay 2005; Kepel 2004). In a recent article, political scientist Barbara Walter identifies the extreme ideology of Salafi

jihadists with militant jihad, rejection of democracy, and the embrace of a very narrow and conservative version of sharia (Islamic law) (2017, 16). With their purported desire to bring about the rule of sharia, the jihadists hope to gain legitimacy and support in sharia-popular communities. The jihadist groups aim to bring the entire world under the ambit of sharia or Islamic law through force, including terrorism (Sieck 2011; Habeck 2012; Wood 2015). An issue of immense concern is the explosive growth of these groups in a little over two decades. As noted in a 2014 RAND report, in 1988 there were just three Salafi jihadist groups, but by 2013 there were 49 (Jones, 27).

To mitigate the radicalization threat, the causes must be understood. Salafi radicalism has proven to be a monumental academic and policy challenge (Schmid 2013; Sageman 2014; Hoffman 2016). The conventional explanation for this, as elucidated by the likes of historian Will McCants, formerly of the Brookings Institution, is that attacks by Islamists have "a confluence of causes, and because we're dealing with the human mind and the interplay of complex social and political factors, it's difficult to separate the crucial from the incidental" (Fisher, 2016). Political scientist Omer Taspinar has provided a similar explanation: the "root causes of terrorism and violent radicalism are extremely complex, multifaceted, and often intertwined. They resist simplification and easy categorization" (2009, 76).

The above characterizations of radicalism need to be revisited, as they make coherent policy formulations inherently problematic with their insistence on irreducible complexity. For example, the 2015 United Nations secretary general's report identifies the following *drivers* as structural-contextual conditions conducive to violent extremism: lack of socioeconomic opportunities; marginalization and discrimination; poor governance; violations of human rights and the rule of law; prolonged and unresolved conflicts; and radicalization in prisons (Ki-Moon 2015). The report also defines the following *processes* of radicalization: individual backgrounds and motivations; collective grievances and victimization; distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies, and ethnic and cultural differences; and leadership and social networks (Ki-Moon, 2015).

Indeed, other studies also back the fact that certain local conditions drive violent radicalization (Varvelli

2016). But the UN report fails to explain why these "drivers" and "processes" induce religious radicalization mostly among those who practice the Islamic faith, unlike those who practice other faiths or no faith at all.[1] Furthermore, the report also fails to acknowledge that radicalism was a relatively unknown phenomenon in Muslim communities until the spread of Wahhabism from Saudi Arabia (more on this later), even though these Muslim communities were exposed decades ago to many of these very drivers and processes. All of the above suggests that there must be new Muslim-community-specific causes behind Salafi jihadism.

Princeton scholar Bernard Haykel identifies Wahhabism as being ideologically close to Salafism:

> Salafis are closely identified with the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia because of a shared theological orientation and because the Wahhabis are claimed to be Salafis from the early 20th century, if not before. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia adheres to a Salafi interpretation of Islam, and its promotion and defense have been a source of legitimacy for its ruling family since the mid-18th century. From the 1920s, Saudi monarchs regularly patronized Salafis in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, South Asia, and elsewhere and subsidized the publication of this movement's books (Haykel 2012, 484).[2]

Still, two questions remain: 1) Is it possible that the Wahhabi influence, by itself, caused radicalization, which, in turn, took advantage of the local drivers/conditions to grow and induced processes or secondary causes, and if so, how can one prove that? 2) If the answer to the first question is affirmative, how exactly has the propagation of Wahhabism led to the global phenomenon of Salafi jihadism?

To my knowledge, no published work has made a concerted attempt to answer the first question. As for the second question, one published paper by the author has provided an ad hoc explanation that traces radicalism to Wahhabism's influence through sharia and religious leaders (Muthuswamy 2016). However, the current article provides a general conceptual framework that links the propagation of Wahhabism with Salafi jihadism.

This article proposes the following testable hypothesis in the form of a theory of Salafist radicalism that ad-

dresses both of the above questions: *Backed by the prestige and resources of Saudi Arabia, religious leaders have popularized the appealing theme of sharia as all-encompassing "divine law" to advance radical Islamist agendas.*

The article is organized as follows. I first develop ideas that define a methodological framework to understand the phenomenon. Such a framework involves delineating the phenomenon in terms of primary and secondary process and through the use of enablers and an underlying theme. (The enabler behind the primary process is the independent variable associated with causation, and the effect is radicalization, the dependent variable. Although secondary processes also contribute to the effect, their underlying variables are not considered independent, because, as noted below, only in the aftermath of the influence of the primary process do secondary processes become relevant.) The next section develops the idea of a primary cause of radicalization, followed by discussion and a conclusion.

Method

As argued before, it seems that new Muslim-community-specific processes have caused the phenomenon of Salafi jihadism. Surely, in communities where this phenomenon is longstanding, the underlying causes or processes can be complex, as noted above. But that does not mean *a priori* that all of the apparent causes should be in the same hierarchy. In fact, reports on the threat of Salafist jihadism in newly radicalized Kosovo (see the discussion below) suggest that the processes behind its transition into radicalism may not have been all that complex after all. This analysis incentivizes the separation of the processes behind the Salafist radicalism into primary and secondary ones, by associating primary processes with how a Muslim community transitions from a predominantly moderate state to a significantly radicalized one, and secondary processes with new channels of radicalization in communities with longstanding exposure to the phenomenon.

As hinted above, there is another good reason to conclude that a primary process can induce secondary processes. Let us say, for argument's sake, that one can identify a primary process behind the transformation of a moderate Muslim community into a hotbed of Salafi jihadism. Then any secondary process that contributes to radicalism after the fact is induced by the primary process, because formerly, the community was, by definition, a moderate one. The logic of inducement puts an onus on developing an understanding of the primary process and its underlying independent variable, the enablers.

Social processes can lead to social phenomena. The possible existence of a simple explanation for a global social phenomenon follows from the following commonsense requirement: the underlying theme driving the dynamic ought to be simple and appealing the world over and backed by established and well-resourced enablers in the form of accessible (local or Internet-based) community entities. Conversely, if a theme is complex, unappealing, or lacks such backing, it is unlikely to take root. Enablers can pursue their self-interest in the form of agendas they seek to popularize. To achieve their objective and sustain their support, enablers must be uniquely positioned to popularize and take advantage of the theme. How appealing a theme is will then depend on how relevant it is to the members of a community. In the novel theoretical framework of Salafi jihadism outlined here, then, primary and secondary processes, defined through explanations, link the theme and its enablers. Through this framework, the article aims to identify a primary Muslim-community-specific process behind Salafi radicalization.

The idea that not just any explanation, but a simple explanation, likely defines a given local or global phenomenon has a solid scientific basis, visible in the "simplicity premise" that underlines the ideas that drive the natural sciences and the simple laws upon which they are based. According to physics Nobel Laureate Steven Weinberg, underlying "simplicity and rigidity" in the explanation of a phenomenon are "a means to the end of finding scientific explanations and judging their validity" (1992, 149). What Weinberg means by "rigidity" here is the precise order and wording of an explanation, such that when expressed in any other way, it ceases to convey the same meaning. The assertion in a previous paragraph that, for a given social phenomenon, a primary process induces secondary ones is consistent with the premise of simplicity. Further, the premise advocates the existence of only one primary process, defined by one theme-enablers combination.

While the premise of simplicity may potentially be applicable to specific scenarios in the social sciences,

the framework applied to radicalization in this article does not just assume that to be the case. In the field of political science, it is standard practice to formulate and test hypotheses, but that endeavor alone does not lead to framing a theory (Mearsheimer and Walt 2013; Drezner 2016). The importance of a theory is that—because it is explanatory—it aids our understanding of a phenomenon and, accordingly, enables us to deal with it. A key measure of the utility of an explanation or theory of a phenomenon lies in being defined through a general framework that encompasses similar phenomena.

In our case, the proposed explanation of Salafi radicalization, through the use of a theme and enablers, ties into a general framework of social phenomena. As we will see, there is a distinct advantage in doing so, in that both violent and non-violent extremism come across as two sides of the same coin. Indeed, recent research has shown that the distinction between violent and non-violent Muslim extremism is illusionary—though they mainly disagree on tactics, they share a disturbingly uncompromising stance that rejects modernity while advancing a conservative religion-centric worldview (Schmid 2014).

The next section puts forth an answer to the first question. Studying the onset of radicalization in Kosovo, it holds that the Wahhabi influence propagated by religious leaders, thanks to the sharia platform, caused radicalization by itself. But the data from Kosovo, as we will see, is not able to answer the second question, namely, how all of this ties into the global phenomenon. To answer the latter question, I review the data available globally. A justification of this approach stems from the premise that the Wahhabism-specific dynamic led to radicalism in Kosovo and elsewhere. I also propose using age-specific correlations of radicalization measures to help identify and establish the primary cause in any community. Furthermore, I use the framework of sharia as the theme and religious leaders as its enablers to delineate the means by which Wahhabism propagated and enabled radicalism to take root in communities worldwide.

Identifying the Primary Cause of Salafi Radicalization

The Case of Kosovo

Specific traits make Kosovo well suited for studying the onset of radicalization, especially by associating religious leaders as the enablers behind the sharia

theme. It is a new Muslim-majority nation situated in Eastern Europe. Importantly, it is a newcomer to radicalism—virtually none existed there about 20 years ago (KCSS 2015; Gall 2016).[3] In fact, the secular identity of Kosovo was well-established, thanks to decades of communist rule. A 2016 report observes the following:

> During the communist period, religious communities were under state control, and their impact on society was quite limited. With the beginning of transition and efforts for freedom of Kosovo, the political pluralism among ethnic Albanians was developed based on strong ethnic secularism with multi-religious cohabitation, which, as such, was coinciding with modern European values and aspirations. In the past, both Muslim and Christian religious Kosovo Albanian leaderships played a significant role in building this identity. However, this secular social and political identity of Kosovo Albanians started to fade immediately after the war of 1999, with the intrusion of religion-based organizations from the Middle East countries. Moreover, after the Declaration of Independence in 2008, the political and radical Islam started to grip a significant ground in Kosovo, which coincided also with the "Arab Spring" and the emergence of the "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria" – ISIS (KIPRED 2016, 8).[4]

Indeed, a 2015 report by a Kosovo think tank "recognizes the strong impact of Saudi Arabia in introducing more conservative religious ideas and practices and in widely spreading more conservative ideas and practices in and around Kosovo" (KCSS 2015, 30). To a lesser extent, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain have also financed the spread of these ideas and practices (KCSS 2015, 56), but they, too, share Salafi ideology with Saudi Arabia.

In recent years, despite being mostly moderate (Republic of Kosovo 2015), Kosovo has earned the reputation of having the highest per-capita number of citizens migrating to lands controlled by the Islamic State, including women and children (KCSS 2015; Republic of Kosovo 2015; Gall 2016). The 20-odd years since the 1990s have also seen, for the first time, the (well-documented) introduction and spread of Wahhabi ideologies and practices there (KCSS 2015; Republic of Kosovo 2015). An example of Wahhabi practice in Kosovo, alien to the local customs but incentivized by Saudi charities, was the requirement, in return for monthly stipends, that Kosovo Muslim

families "attended sermons in the mosque and that women and girls wore the veil" (Gall 2016). Kosovo's then-director of counterterrorism police had claimed in 2016 that the Saudis "supported thinkers who promote violence and jihad in the name of protecting Islam" (Gall 2016). Indeed, the Saudi charity Al Waqf al Islami (Gall 2016) was at that point funding associations run by radical clerics in "almost every regional town" in Kosovo (Gall 2016). It should be noted that Wahhabism is also known for imposing an exclusive outlook at the expense of other Islamic thoughts and practices (Waterman 2014).

One might reasonably wonder whether the political, economic, and social disruption caused by the Balkan wars of the 1990s by themselves triggered the radicalization of the Kosovar community (Republic of Kosovo 2015; Richardson 2017). However, there is little documented evidence of similarly disrupted non-Muslim communities resorting to violence in the name of religion (Fine 2008). Moreover, the Kosovar community was relatively secular both before and during the wars, and hence, it was not possible for it to embrace religious radicalism without the infusion of Wahhabi-type ideologies. Second, the radicalized individuals showed telltale signs of an outlook influenced by these ideologies, such as supporting or moving to the sharia-adhering and jihad-waging Islamic State.

If anything, some religious leaders took advantage of high unemployment levels among Balkan youth to provide needed public services such as schools and hospitals and "life coaching"—in the form of ideas derived from Wahhabism and passing on their sharia interpretations as all-encompassing divine law.[5] By doing so, they gained the goodwill of the community and the trust of the youth and indoctrinated them into radicalism (Petrović 2016). As Gall observes, Saudi-trained clerics propagated the tenets of Wahhabism in Kosovo, including the "supremacy of the [s]haria law as well as ideas of violent jihad . . ." (2016).

In Kosovo, according to a 2013 Pew poll, only 20% of the public support the idea that sharia should be the law of the land, and only 10% and 27% of the public support a role for religious leaders as judges and their involvement in politics, respectively (Bell 2013). These support levels would seem to constitute a bar to the formation of local jihadist groups that fight to implement sharia as the local law of the land (see Table 1).

Yet the Islamic State has managed to recruit a relatively high number of young men from Kosovo (KCSS 2015, 27). The significant role of religious leaders in the recruitment process is confirmed by the fact that the Kosovo police arrested 14 religious leaders for their role in Islamic State recruitment (Gall 2016). In fact, a 2015 government-sponsored study singles out the role of religious leaders in the radicalization process in Kosovo: "Some imams [religious leaders] with radical tendency, whether in Kosovo or in Balkans have played a role in encouraging or active form in recruiting the Kosovars to go and fight in Syria [by joining the sharia-favoring jihadist groups]. In addition, some of them have contributed to the development of a religious extremist ideology over recent years" (Republic of Kosovo 2015, 14).

The central question, then, ought to be what has made religious leaders and their radical ideas influential in Kosovo. This is where sharia as a platform for religious leaders enters the picture, in that, 30% of those polled in Kosovo considered sharia to be the "revealed word of God" (Bell 2013, 42). As discussed subsequently, sharia is intimately connected with religious leaders as their individual interpretations of Islam, and in the Saudi construct in particular, it is deemed all encompassing "divine" law. Tables 3 and 4 below reveal the power of the sharia platform in Kosovo, in that, compared to those who do not favor sharia, those who do are *five times* more likely to be supportive of religious leaders and their radical ideas. The sharia-centric background of Salafi religious leaders can also explain why they encouraged the Kosovo youths to go and fight in Syria, as noted earlier. Indeed, the youngmen of Kosovo who migrated to the Islamic State stated that their support for the cause of sharia was one of their main reasons for moving there (Shutni 2016, 10). The situation applies beyond Kosovo as well: Tables 3 and 4 show that the power of the sharia platform is consistent across geographical, ethnic, and cultural divides.

Moreover, once initiated, the impressionable youths are particularly vulnerable to further radicalization through the social media, where similar worldviews are readily exchanged and reinforced online. Furthermore, in neighboring Muslim-majority Albania, some researchers found that the radicalization process was in the beginning stages and was being propagated through an uncontested discourse involving Wahhabi-type ideologies (Vurmo 2015).

Table 1: *Support Levels for Sharia and Religious Leaders Correlated with Salafi Jihadism*

Country	Support for Sharia as the Law of the Land (in %)	Support for Religious Judges (in %)	Support for Religious Leaders in Politics (in %)	Homegrown Jihadist Attacks
Kosovo	20	10	27	No
Albania	12	11	17	No
Bosnia	15	6	17	No
Kyrgyzstan	35	44	46	Weak
Turkey	12	14	36	Strong
Tajikistan	27	33	28	Weak
Kazakhstan	10	14	24	Weak
Azerbaijan	8	8	14	Weak
Russia	42	NA	58	Strong
Malaysia	86	84	82	Weak
Indonesia	72	66	75	Strong
Afghanistan	99	78	82	Strong
Bangladesh	82	71	69	Strong
Pakistan	84	84	54	Strong
Egypt	74	94	75	Strong
Palestinian Terr.	89	75	72	Strong
Tunisia	56	42	58	Strong
Iraq	91	73	57	Strong
Jordan	71	93	80	Weak
Lebanon	29	53	37	Strong
Nigeria	71	NA	NA	Strong

The above arguments advance the premise that socioeconomic stagnation is only a secondary cause of radicalization that emerged after the primary process of radicalization based upon certain aspects of Wahhabism had already gotten underway, and that socioeconomic stagnation, without the Wahhabi influence, could not have caused radicalization all by itself. In fact, two recent studies found that youths with a more secure economic background and access to better education have a higher chance of being radicalized in Kosovo (Shutni 2016; UNDP 2017).

As we come to understand the dynamic behind the onset of radicalization in Kosovo, it is hardly plausible to find anything behind it other than Wahhabism. It is important to note the cause-and-effect sequence here: only with the infusion of Wahhabism and its propagation through the efforts of Wahhabi religious leaders did Wahhabi-styled radicalization take root in Kosovo. That is, due to the earlier secularization in Kosovo, there is no historical threat (through confounding variables) to the internal integrity/validity (Krathwohl 2009, 153, 487) of the defined causal process. The discussion in this section establishes how the independent variable (religious leaders) influenced the dependent variable (radicalization).

Strikingly, Kosovo is not alone in this context. Around the mid-20th century, in most Muslim countries, secular regimes ruled, and moderate civic elements were influential in the public space. Another notable characteristic of this era was the relative absence of Islamist militant groups: modernity and moderation prevailed in many Muslim communities that are now hotbeds of Salafi jihadism. For instance, even up until the 1970s, it was common for women in Kabul to wear Western clothing and mix freely with men (Tornhill 2014). Indeed, scholars and commentators have long asserted that Wahhabism plays a prominent role in spawning radicalism worldwide (Ghoshal 2007; Friedman 2015). A manifestation of the spread of Wahhabism is what some call "Arabization," ranging from an increased preference for a conservative Arab dress code to favoring sharia law over modern secular law (Ghoshal 2008).

The Worldwide Propagation of the Wahhabi Influence
Unlike Kosovo, at the outset, many other Muslim communities were far from secular as they plunged deeper into radicalization. In such cases, a question

arises as to how one can still associate the same primary cause with the global Salafi jihadist phenomenon, given Saudi Arabia's worldwide export of Wahhabism since the 1980s (MEMRI 2002; Moniquet 2013).

It must be noted that the discovery of oil wealth allowed Saudi Arabia to forsake instituting the religious, political, and economic reforms typically required for wealth creation. Moreover, on the broader front, since the 1970s, oil largesse has enabled Saudi Arabia—the birthplace of Islam and home to its "two holy mosques"—to construct and operate mosques and religious schools that preach and export sharia and armed jihad intimately bound up with the Wahhabi version of Islam worldwide,[6] as well as ancillary activities like training religious leaders, media outreach and publishing, distribution of religious text-

books, and endowments to universities and cultural centers (USCIRF 2008; Choksy and Choksy 2015). These data support the thesis that the common denominator of Wahhabi influence could be behind a primary process of radicalization worldwide.

How does one show the external generality/validity (Krathwohl 2009, 153) of a causal process of radicalization identified previously? I contend that six main findings support the premise that worldwide propagation of Wahhabism, as in Kosovo, led to the global phenomenon of Salafi jihadism. One, as noted in the introduction, many of the drivers and processes said to be behind the phenomenon did not initiate religious radicalization in non-Muslim communities, or, importantly, even in Muslim communities before Wahhabism's propagation.

Table 2: *Age-Specific Correlations of Radicalization Measures among British Muslims*

	Preference for Sharia Law over British Law (in %)	Admiration for al-Qaeda (in %)	Support for Killing Apostates (in %)
Between Ages 16 and 24	37	13	36
Between Ages 25 and 34	32	6	37
Over 55 Years of Age	17	3	19

Table 3: *Impact of Sharia's Popularity on Religious Leaders' Influence*

Country	Support for Sharia as the Law of the Land (in %)	Support for Religious Judges (in %)	Support for Religious Judges among Those Who Support the Idea of Sharia as the Law of the Land (in %)	Support for Religious Judges among Those Who Do Not Support the Idea of Sharia as the Law of the Land (in %)
Kosovo	20	10	26	6
Albania	12	11	55	5
Bosnia	15	6	24	3
Kyrgyzstan	35	44	65	33
Turkey	12	14	48	9
Tajikistan	27	33	66	21
Kazakhstan	10	14	59	9
Azerbaijan	8	8	NA	NA
Russia	42	36	62	17
Malaysia	86	84	88	59
Indonesia	72	66	71	53
Afghanistan	99	78	78	78
Bangladesh	82	71	78	39
Pakistan	84	84	87	68
Egypt	74	94	95	91
Palestinian Terr.	89	75	80	35
Tunisia	56	42	62	17
Iraq	91	73	76	43
Jordan	71	93	93	93
Lebanon	29	53	75	44

Two, only since the 1980s has there been an explosive global increase in the number of jihadist groups (Jones 2015, 27). Three, in the data noted in Table 1, the support levels for religious leaders and sharia broadly correlate with the strength of homegrown jihadist attacks. Four, the support levels for religious leaders and the radical ideas they espouse (Tables 3 and 4) also broadly correlate with the support for sharia.

Five, the Salafi radical group the Islamic State managed to recruit youths from many countries around the planet, in part because it declared itself a "caliphate"—a unified Islamic state governed by sharia. As a World Public Opinion Global Poll—conducted in Morocco, Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia—revealed in 2007, a strong majority in these communities, 65%, say they desire a caliphate (Kull 2007, 15). Moreover, 71% agree to the requirement of a "strict application of sharia law in every Islamic country" (Kull 2007, 21). The key here is the importance given to a strict view of sharia and promotion of the idea that sharia be the law of the land—both of which are prominent characteristics of Saudi Arabia's sharia laws (Otterman 2015; Eijk 2010)9.

Six, I propose that the use of a longitudinal study involving age-specific correlations of radicalization measures helps delineate the impact of Wahhabism. Since measures of the time-correlated extent of sharia's influence in radicalized communities generally do not exist, the age-specific correlations are a useful alternative, given that the older members of the public are set in their outlook compared to the impressionable younger members exposed to Wahhabi propaganda since the 1980s. Such data is readily available in the case of the Muslim-minority community in the United Kingdom.

A recent report identifies the source and the extent of Wahhabi propagation in the United Kingdom:

> The foreign funding for Islamist extremism in Britain primarily comes from governments and government-linked foundations based in the Gulf, as well as Iran. Foremost among these has been Saudi Arabia, which since the 1960s has sponsored a multi-million dollar effort to export Wahhabi Islam across the Islamic world, including to Muslim communities in the West. In the UK this funding has primarily taken the form of

endowments to mosques and Islamic educational institutions, which have in turn played host to extremist preachers and the distribution of extremist literature. Influence has also been exerted through the training of British Muslim religious leaders in Saudi Arabia, as well as the use of Saudi textbooks in a number of the UK's independent Islamic schools (Wilson 2017, 1).

A survey of British Muslims reveals (Table 2) that a significant percentage of the younger population supports violence and sharia, unlike the older generation (Policy Exchange 2007, 46, 47, 62). Moreover, the age-specific correlation of the radicalization process and the increased popularity of sharia suggests that the radicalization trend is a recent phenomenon that coincides with Saudi Arabia's propagation of Wahhabism, influencing impressionable young minds. Indeed, a 2007 undercover investigation revealed that in closed-door gatherings, a prominent mosque in Britain promoted a harsher form of sharia and advocated intolerance and violence. Moreover, the investigation linked the teachings and materials found at the mosque with Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi establishment (Channel 4 2008).

Reports from the United Kingdom indicate that about 100,000 Muslim children attend evening Islamic classes, often held in mosques, for up to two hours a day, where they learn the basic tenets of sharia and the curriculum often criticizes Jews and Hindus (Gardham and Whitehead 2012; Open Society Institute 2005). It is true that about 40% of the mosques there subscribe to the South Asia-originated Deobandi version of Islam (Bowen 2014).[7] But they have increasingly been co-opted by Wahhabis, who finance Deobandi mosques and train their religious leaders (Wilson 2017). As with those from Kosovo, the foreign fighters from the United Kingdom who joined the Islamic State were overwhelmingly young (BBC News 2017).

Sharia as the Theme
To understand the nature and goals of Wahhabi activity in Kosovo and elsewhere, we must discuss the ideological basis of Wahhabi religious leaders' religious and political convictions. Saudi textbooks have praised armed jihad, including calling it the "pinnacle of Islam" (USCIRF 2008). Not surprisingly, Saudi Arabia also pioneered the international sponsorship of armed jihad in a modern context during the

Afghan Islamic insurgency of the 1980s (Guardian 2009). Saudi-based entities have also funded jihadist groups in Syria (Black 2013).

Several clues suggest that sharia—thanks to Saudi backing—constitutes the theme that provides a platform for religious leaders to influence the masses in Kosovo and beyond (Muthuswamy 2014). Before we discuss this idea further, however, it is pertinent to emphasize that unless backed by influential and resourceful community entities, a theme may face great difficulty becoming popular. Indeed, before Wahhabism was propagated outside Saudi Arabia, radical Islamic leaders in given countries—including Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb in Egypt and Abul Ala Maududi in Pakistan—had only limited success in popularizing the theme of sharia as a "complete" divine guide to life (Calvert 2010; Owen 2014).

Sharia in various permutations has long been familiar to Muslims; it is not a code of law as such but a body of religious and legal scholarship. While Muslims regard sharia as an essential guide to life, it is nevertheless, in any given case, only a particular interpretation of Islam by a religious leader. As a theme, sharia is understandably appealing and straightforward—for believers, it is very relevant as a divine guide to their daily life. A measure of sharia as a platform for religious leaders is the following statistic: in 17 out of 23 nations, the majority of the Muslims surveyed in a 2013 Pew Research Center report considered sharia to be the "revealed word of God" (Bell 2013, 42). Interpretations of sharia vary widely; in general (but not always), they tend to reflect the cultural norms of the Arab tribes of a bygone era (Otterman 2005; Doi 2008; Macfarquhar 2009; Muhammad 2012). In Saudi Arabia, however, interpretation of sharia by religious leaders forms the basis of the rule of law (Vogel 2000; Eijk 2010; Johnson and Sergie 2014). In this Saudi construct, sharia is an all-encompassing supreme divine law, seen as an essential guide to life. Moreover, through its overarching role in governance and law, sharia functions as a prominent platform for legitimizing and popularizing radical ideas in Saudi society and has come to define how Wahhabism is viewed and practiced there, including through enforcement by the religious police (Khan 2015).[8] In this sense, sharia and Wahhabism reinforce each other in Saudi Arabia.

The power structure in the Kingdom consists of an alliance between the al Saud ruling family and Wahhabi religious leaders (Barmin 2018). Moreover, sharia forms an essential ideological and legal basis (as "divine" law) for regressive religious leaders in Saudi Arabia to acquire political power and institutionalize themselves in the ruling hierarchy. It perpetuates their status, plays a critical role in governance, and sanctions violence of various kinds. There is every reason to suspect that Wahhabi religious leaders envision a similar role for sharia in Kosovo and elsewhere. For example, the Muslim World League, a leading Saudi-government-funded charity involved in spreading Wahhabism worldwide (Moniquet 2013), calls on "individuals, communities, and state entities to abide by the rules of the Sharia" (MWL 2014).

Religious Leaders as the Enablers

This section explores the influence of religious leaders as the enablers, the independent variable of this study. Muslim religious leaders have been at the forefront of interpreting and popularizing scriptures and awareness of Islam's history among the faithful. Typically, they undergo years of education in special religious schools that use dated and regressive Islamic syllabuses (designed in the 17th century—in South Asia, for example), with sharia among their focuses (Sedgwick 2001; Ahmad 2004). As is to be expected, there is a considerable variation in their expertise level (Fair et al. 2012, 695). Here the designation Muslim "religious leaders" applies to those who, through formal religious training or self-study, are recognized as such by their communities; the term entails command of the scriptures and Islam's history.

A published analysis of the extensive data presented in the 2013 Pew report reveals close interlinkage between the influences of sharia and of religious leaders. In all 20 nations for which data are available, the public's support for religious leaders' playing a role in politics or law and jurisprudence rises and falls with its support for sharia as the law of the land (Bell 2013; Muthuswamy 2016, 4). The data is reproduced in Table 1. A more detailed analysis of the Pew data presented in Table 3 reveals the sharia-religious leader dynamic in intimate detail. This table includes the extent of support for religious judges by those who favor the idea of sharia as the law of the land (Bell 2013, 50). It also includes in Column 5, support for religious judges by those who do not favor sharia as law of the land.[9] While the entries in Column 4 reveal how religious leaders—the only sharia experts (as sharia is a

religious leader's interpretation of Islam)—can benefit from sharia's popularity, the entries for Column 5 suggest that, in general, a significant percentage of people who do not favor sharia tend to favor religious leaders in communities where sharia is popular. This is likely due to the esteem with which religious leaders are held in such communities as sharia experts.

When religious leaders can market their interpretations of Islam under the aegis of sharia as all-encompassing "divine" law and guide to life, those leaders take on a new kind of relevance to the behavior of their believers, and that establishes them as influential enablers of sharia. This includes the religious leaders who often hold senior leadership positions in Islamist militant groups, which rely on those religious leaders for their exegetical expertise and as a conduit to the public (Zee News 2007). Even the ruling regimes that advance radical Islamist agendas have to rely on religious leaders for their exegetical expertise. Direct evidence of religious leaders advocating for sharia occurred in an influential 2008 Indian conference attended by thousands of religious leaders. The conference communique asked Muslims "to spend their lives in the country following Islamic sharia and teachings with full confidence" (Upadhyay 2008).

Moreover, religious leaders are also in a unique position to advance radical agendas in the name of religion, such as demanding the death penalty for alleged acts of blasphemy (MEMRI 2013). In fact, religious leaders are a source of extreme ideologies (Coulson 2004). Some Muslim leaders are frequently known to invoke the doctrine of armed jihad—both the offensive and the defensive kind (Kepel 2003).[10] For example, even in countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, where governments have long co-opted religious institutions, a significant subset of religious leaders has espoused or supported armed jihad (Nielsen 2012). In Pakistan, at least 25% of religious leaders may identify with armed jihad (Muthuswamy 2014, 354). Another measure of the extent of clerical sanction for violence in Pakistan is that between 10% and 15% of the religious schools (madrasas) run by clerics are involved in either sectarian militancy or international terrorism (Hussain 2008, 79). One study estimates that a significant portion of the Muslim religious leaders writing on the Internet—ten percent—espouse jihadist ideas (Nielsen 2017, 121). Another study has found that religious leaders who espouse jihadist ideas play an essential role in online radicalization (Carter, Maher, and Neumann 2014).

Many Islamic religious leaders are also known for undercutting modern education while advancing a narrow, religious perspective on education. Of interest here is, again, Saudi Arabia, where sharia is the law of the land and where, as sharia experts, religious leaders obviously hold immense power and influence. Also of interest again is Pakistan, which stands out as a non-Arab nation enmeshed in a high degree of violent Muslim radicalism (Kapur and Ganguly 2012). There 84% of the public support the idea that sharia should be the law of the land, and 84% and 54% of the public support a role of religious leaders as judges and their involvement in politics, respectively (Bell 2013, 18–19, 64). In Saudi Arabia, religious education is emphasized at the expense of modern secular subjects, and this focus is partly responsible for the high unemployment levels among Saudi youth and for the embrace by some of them of armed jihad (Murphy 2011).

In Pakistan, religious leaders have fiercely opposed modernizing education (Abbas 2011). The prominence of these leaders and their ability to keep religion relevant through adherence to sharia could be the reason why 41% of Pakistani parents consider religious education a "top educational priority" for their young children (Nelson 2006). Until 2000, Pakistan had produced at least five times more doctorates in Islamic studies for every doctorate produced in the entire fields of technology and engineering (Muthuswamy 2011, 4).[11] The lack of an alternate explanation leads me to surmise that this outlook, and Pakistan's associated inability to invest in modern education, have caused socioeconomic stagnation and have made armed jihad a vocation for underemployed youths there (Tavernise and Gillani 2010).[12]

All of the above points to the transformative power of Muslim religious leaders. This is best exemplified by comparing Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. The two countries were created from the same entity, British India, in 1947 and share culture(s), history, language(s), ethnicity(-ies), and culinary habits. However, their political and socioeconomic paths have diverged since their birth. India has become a modern, moderate democracy that invested in modern higher education. Pakistan, by contrast, has become increasingly radicalized; it has failed to invest in modern higher education, and its elected governments are often deposed by its military (Perth Education City 2012; Muthuswamy 2014). It is worth

noting that Hindu religious leaders have far less political influence in their community in India than their Muslim counterparts do in theirs (Chibber and Sekhon 2016).

The United Kingdom is another valuable example, reflecting the globalization of the phenomenon of Salafi jihadism and because, according to a 2007 report, about 50% of the religious leaders of British mosques are from Pakistan (BBC News 2007).[13] The Hindu and Muslim diasporas in the United Kingdom have gone through evolutions similar to those in the parent nations. It was reported in 2013 that "most British jihadists [going to Syria]. . . . [are] Muslims of British Pakistani origin" and that this community is saddled with nearly twice the unemployment levels of Hindus of Indian origin and the majority whites (Cuffe 2013; Muthuswamy 2014; Policy Exchange 2014, 49). Yet scholars who put the onus on the regimes in countries such as Pakistan to mitigate the threat of radicalism routinely fail to acknowledge those regimes' need to address the transformative power of religious leaders (Kapur and Ganguly 2012, 139–141; Curtis 2016, 28–29; Haqqani and Curtis 2017).

Correlation between Sharia, Religious Leaders, and Violence

The connection between sharia, religious leaders, and violence is manifested in three key aspects. One, as noted in the introduction, violence conducted by Islamist militant groups makes up the vast majority of terrorist violence in general.

Two, religious leaders tend to play a prominent role in such (Salafi) terror groups. According to the START study cited above, the three deadliest terrorist groups in the world, together causing 65% of the fatalities in 2013, are the Taliban, Islamic State, and Boko Haram. The founders or main leaders of each of these groups were or are religious leaders (Mohammed Omar, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, and Mohammed Yusuf, respectively) (Muthuswamy 2016, 7; Telegraph 2015; McCants 2015; Sergie and Johnson 2015).

Three, because militant Islamist groups purportedly fight for the cause of implementing sharia, sharia's popularity aids militant recruitment. When governing by sharia is a popular aspiration in a community, even youths in the community who are neither religious nor well-informed on sharia may be attracted to the adventure of waging armed jihad for the cause of advancing a sharia-governed state or caliphate (Hegghammer 2013; Robinson 2014; Gates and Pod-

der 2015, 113; Dearden 2016).

Hence, it is not surprising that an analysis of the 2013 Pew report outlined in Table 1 reveals the following: of the 10 nations with Muslim populations of 10 million or more and where the majority of the Muslim public support sharia as the law of the land and support a role for religious leaders in politics, homegrown Islamist militant groups have a strong presence in eight (Muthuswamy 2016, 4). Conversely, in eight nations where support for the aforementioned measures is low (Muthuswamy 2016, 4), only in Turkey do homegrown jihadist groups have a strong presence.[14] Arguably, scriptures likely hold less influence in such countries because the ones who can credibly invoke them—religious leaders—have less influence, suggesting that what is in the scriptures may matter less in such communities. In Table 4, I presented the impact of religious leaders' ability to leverage the sharia platform to popularize radical ideas such as whippings or cutting off the hands of thieves and robbers (Cammack 2011). The entries in Columns 3 and 4 come from the 2013 Pew report (Bell 2013, 52, 220), and the entries in Column 5 were calculated by me.[15] While the entries in Column 4 reveal how sharia's popularity can lead to popularizing radical ideas, the entries in Column 5 suggest that, in general, a significant percentage of those who do not favor sharia tend to favor radical ideas in communities where sharia enjoys significant popularity. This correlation is likely due to the majority in such communities associating the corporal punishments with sharia laws (Otterman 2015).

One may wonder whether Saudi Arabia's prestige and resources alone—with the sharia-dominated ideology playing a minimal role—helped religious leaders advance radical agendas. This possibility should be discounted for two reasons. One, as the correlations in Tables 3 and 4 attest, religious leaders and the radical ideas they propagate have minimal influence among those who hardly favor sharia, while the influences are exactly the opposite in communities that highly favor sharia. (In fact, as noted previously, in such communities, even those who do not favor sharia as the law of the land can provide significant support to religious leaders and their radical ideas.) Two, sharia has come to refer to a unifying aspiration for a movement (of which global Salafi jihadism is one) to make sharia the law of the land. In both of these aspects, there is a convergence of interests between sharia's backer, Saudi Arabia and its enablers, religious leaders.

Table 4: *Impact of Sharia's Popularity on Religious Leaders' Ability to Propagate Radical Ideas*

Country	Support for Sharia as the Law of the Land (in %)	Support for Corporal Punishment Advocated by Religious Leaders (in %)	Support for Corporal Punishment among Those Who Support the Idea of Sharia as the Law of the Land (in %)	Support for Corporal Punishment among Those Who Do Not Support the Idea of Sharia as the Law of the Land (in %)
Kosovo	20	10	28	6
Albania	12	9	43	4
Bosnia	15	13	32	10
Kyrgyzstan	35	37	54	28
Turkey	12	12	35	9
Tajikistan	27	20	40	13
Kazakhstan	10	13	31	11
Azerbaijan	8	6	NA	NA
Russia	42	23	39	11
Malaysia	86	61	66	30
Indonesia	72	37	45	16
Afghanistan	99	81	81	81
Bangladesh	82	50	50	50
Pakistan	84	85	88	69
Egypt	74	70	70	70
Palestinian Terr.	89	72	76	40
Tunisia	56	28	44	8
Iraq	91	55	56	45
Jordan	71	54	57	47
Lebanon	29	20	50	8

The relevance of support for sharia to the thriving of violent religious radicalism in a community can hardly be overstated. As I noted in the previous section, as sharia's influence grows in a community, so does public support for a political role for religious leaders. It also increases public support for jihadist groups, because, according to an analysis of a 2002 poll conducted in 14 nations with large Muslim populations, "[r]espondents who believe that religious leaders should play a larger role in politics are substantially *more likely* to support terrorism" (Fair and Shepherd 2006, 71).

Thus, in a community that is shifting from mainly moderate to significantly radicalized, religious leaders are one of the only entities, if not the only one, that can credibly advance radical Islamist agendas by invoking religion. Furthermore, to be effective, such leaders need to build up the sharia platform by getting the community to increasingly embrace the idea of sharia as the law of the land. Accordingly, the hypothesis becomes an explanation behind a primary process of Muslim radicalization: backed by the prestige and resources of Saudi Arabia, religious leaders have popularized the appealing theme of sharia as all-encompassing "divine law" to advance radical Islamist agendas. This explanation also defines the dynamic of how the independent variable influences the dependent variable.

Discussion

The delineation of the underlying processes of radicalization into primary and secondary ones introduces a natural hierarchy, in that the primary one can induce secondary ones. Moreover, this delineation makes it possible to identify one independent variable, the influence of religious leaders, and study its correlation with the dependent one, the extent of radicalization. The reality contradicts the conventional view outlined by McCants (2016) that "[i]f anyone elevates one of those factors [or causes] above the others to diagnose the problem, you can be certain the resulting prescription will not work." If anything, one could argue—on the basis of the analysis presented in this article—that the policy prescriptions have not worked thus far in part because they have unjustifiably relegated all of

the causes to the same bracket and, importantly, have not been able to delineate the primary process of radicalization.

For example, a recent study of homegrown jihadism in Europe identifies geopolitical grievances as a cause of radicalism (Schuurman, Baker, and Eijkman 2016). In this study, the authors have overlooked the possibility that the identified primary cause triggered radicalization and that, that in turn, empowered religious leaders who then caused the geopolitical grievances (Azzam 2007) as a secondary cause of radicalization. It must be pointed out that only a small minority of those influenced by Salafism resort to violence (Haykel 2012).

It is no longer tenable to deny that the presence of a Muslim-community-specific primary process has spawned radicalization, given that religious radicalism is hardly prevalent in non-Muslim communities and was hardly prevalent in Muslim communities of, say, more than 50 years ago. The existence of religion-invoking processes calls for scrutinizing the role of religious leaders and the means by which they acquire influence. This article advances our understanding of violent Muslim radicalism by showing that the onset of radicalism caused by the identified primary process of radicalism can create conditions for secondary (local) causes to materialize or for the phenomenon to take advantage of community-specific issues. The explanation of the primary process of radicalization provided here also seamlessly integrates both non-violent and violent forms of Muslim extremism.

In this context, Kosovo's unique circumstances, which make it such a suitable case study for delineating the role of Wahhabism's propagation in inducing Salafi radicalism, need to be acknowledged. In fact, I am not aware of any rigorous analysis that espouses any other cause as triggering Islamist radicalization in Kosovo. Indeed, by all accounts, the infusion of Wahhabism instilled conservative Islamism in the formerly secular society. This conservative brand of Islam demands the supremacy of sharia, which in practical terms means the supremacy of religious leaders who invoke sharia and those who invoke armed jihad as well. Wahhabism's advocacy of armed jihad and Saudi Arabia's modern sponsorship of the same set the stage for Salafi jihadism to grow in Kosovo and elsewhere. Seen in this context, the process of radicalization is a gradual one. Especially for the communities that were

not formerly secular, this article proposed and utilized age-specific correlations of radicalization measures to get an idea of the evolution of the radicalization process.

This article suggests not that sharia per se induces violence but that its popularity forms a platform for sharia experts—religious leaders—to become influential. As noted previously, there is a direct correlation between the extent of the public support for sharia and its support for religious leaders. Also notable is the leadership role that religious leaders play in jihadist groups, which invariably seek to impose the supremacy of sharia laws. Still, this article asserts a link between sharia and terrorist violence on the basis of the noted correlations in Table 1. Importantly, this is despite variations in how different communities perceive what sharia is.

One might wonder how a link between sharia and Salafi violence affects Saudi Arabia internally, as sharia is the law of the land there. As sharia interpreters and as part of the ruling establishment, most religious leaders there have a stake in maintaining the status quo. Thus the desirable scenario from their point of view is one of Saudi jihadists engaging in an external jihad as opposed to an internal one. Indeed, of all the foreign nationals, the Saudis were among the largest numbers of suicide bombers during the American occupation of Iraq (Hafez 2007, 72). More recently, Saudis were among the largest contingents in the ranks of the Islamic State's foreign fighters (Fisunoglu and Greer 2006; Al-Saleh 2015).

The identification of sharia as the theme and religious leaders as the enablers for a prominent primary process of Muslim radicalization is dictated by the data. As discussed, certain unique circumstances have led to the emergence of sharia and religious leaders as a standout theme-enabler combination that has ushered in the global threat of Salafi jihadism. The data analysis of the 2013 Pew Research Center report supports this premise. Indeed, the data from both Tables 3 and 4 suggest that in all of the communities, those who favor sharia tend to be more supportive of religious leaders and their radical ideas.

The study of Kosovo and the noted lack of Salafi radicalization before Wahhabism's propagation show that it is highly unlikely that other primary processes of radicalization exist. Within the context of the world-

wide spread of Wahhabism, and religious leaders playing the role as its indispensable enblers, only sharia has stood out as an influential theme deemed relevant to daily life. As noted before, sharia's uniqueness stems from the pivotal role it plays in Wahhabism. It is a religious leader's interpretation of Islam, and has great appeal as "all-encompassing divine" law. Interestingly, this primary explanation conforms to the simplicity requirement mentioned in the introduction: just one primary process, defined by one theme-enablers combination. But this explanation does not rule out the possibility that the primary combination induces secondary processes (such as the ones outlined in the introduction) that also sustain the phenomenon, especially in communities where Salafi jihadism has been a longstanding problem. It must be kept in mind that secondary combinations must be prominent in order to be influential; and as argued in the introduction, secondary processes should have been induced by the primary process.

Let us consider an example of a secondary process of radicalization: former al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden (viewed here as the enabler, but not generally deemed a religious leader) issued an influential 1998 call for "attacks on Americans" by invoking the following theme: "Allah ordered us in this religion to purify Muslim land of all non-believers. . . ." (NY Times 1998) Even bin Laden's case falls into the pattern outlined above, in that his rise to fame through his participation in the Afghan jihad of the 1980s benefited from the support the jihadis received from prominent religious leaders such as Palestine-born Abdullah Azzam and Saudi Arabia's then-top cleric, Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz, and of course, as noted before, the Kingdom itself (Suellentrop 2002; QSEP). Bin Laden also helped his cause by being a consistent supporter of the primary theme—sharia (Guardian 2002). This example tells us that the secondary processes of radicalization likely rely on the strength of the primary one. The extent to which secondary processes are independently important or will remain important in the absence of the influence of the primary process can only be known if significant headway is made in combating the identified primary process behind Salafi jihadism.

Since the data from non-Muslim communities indicate that the mere presence of drivers of secondary processes does not lead to religious radicalization in these communities, this article suggests an initial focus on the identified primary process of radicaliza-

tion. Accordingly, the temptation to launch reactive counterterrorism initiatives designed to mitigate the impact of secondary radicalization processes—based upon rationales such as "[m]otivations for foreign [Islamist] fighters are derived from highly specific local conditions, and so must the solutions be" (Rosenblatt 2016)—must be resisted. Moreover, not grasping the existence of a link between sharia and radicalism can indeed lead to legitimizing the former, thereby inadvertently facilitating the latter. For instance, in sharia-popular Malaysia, ill-advised counter-radicalization initiatives involve asking Islamist radicals to desist from violence by assuring them that the government is working toward the shared goal of sharia's full implementation (Abuza 2008).

From a policy perspective, the above explanations and Tables 1 through 4 suggest that undercutting the influence of sharia and thereby that of religious leaders are essential first steps for effectively combating Salafi jihadism. (The issue is not just the religious leaders who advocate violence but also those who have broadly undermined modern secular education, leading to devastating socioeconomic consequences that can act as drivers of secondary processes of radicalization. Moreover, by building up the sharia platform, even "moderate" religious leaders are in danger of advancing their counterparts' violent agendas.) Unfortunately, however, this perspective is rather new and is not part of the ongoing conversations. For example, in the 2015 Summit on Countering Violent Extremism, then-U.S. president Barack Obama failed to identify the role of religious leaders and sharia in the radicalization process and instead spoke vaguely about undercutting "radical ideology" (2015). Egypt's reform-minded leader Abdel Fatah el-Sisi's recent call to religious leaders to lead the fight against Muslim extremism is rather ill-conceived from this perspective (Ford, Abdelaziz, and Lee 2016). None of the prescriptions outlined in the reports that aim to address radicalism in Kosovo delineate the role played by sharia in providing a platform for propagating radical Islamist agendas, especially by religious leaders (Republic of Kosovo 2015; AKSS 2015; KIPRED 2016; Richardson et al. 2017).

The analysis outlined here bolsters the notion that the transformative power of religious leaders in Muslim-majority nations can lead to conditions that undercut good governance, along with advancing extremism. A government's ability to provide good gov-

ernance is undercut so long as local religious leaders are influential and they attempt to shape community norms through regressive sharia-based diktats. This is not to say that lack of good governance in such communities is due only to the religious leaders' influence, but that it ought to be an important part of it.

Even Saudi Arabia's top cleric has acknowledged the absurdity of sharia-based edicts called fatwas when confronted with a junior cleric's fatwa instructing the public to avoid a supermarket chain because it allowed the mingling of male and female employees and customers (Daraghahi 2010). Moreover, Saudi King Abdullah issued a decree in 2010 that stated the following:

> As part of our religious and national duty, we want you to ensure that fatwas are only issued by members of the Council of Senior Religious Scholars and other permitted people. . . . Individual fatwas on personal matters such as matters of worship, dealings, personal matters are exempt from this ruling, but they should be between the questioner and the scholar. There should be a total ban on any topics involving strange or obsolete views (Boucek 2010).

While the decree attempts to rein in fatwas and restrain clerical power, it also reveals deep inconsistencies in the idea of deeming sharia as divine law. In Pakistan, similarly, authorities have been trying to confront the issue of unregulated, militant-friendly fatwas fueling terrorism and, for instance, sowing seeds of confusion in divorce proceedings, "where both parties are often able to get fatwas in their favor from different scholars" (Muhammad 2012). Although the new Saudi regime has given some indications that it plans to roll back some aspects of Wahhabism (Hubbard 2017), to be effective, one still needs a de-radicalization strategy, which, in turn, requires understanding the underlying causes of Salafi radicalization.

In this regard, what would be the likely impact of policies to reduce the influence of sharia and religious leaders and promote modernity? Fortunately, we may already have an answer. Modern Turkey has long been ruled by secular leaders, who, starting with Kemal Atatürk, sidelined sharia and made religious leaders less relevant by banishing religious schools and promoting modernity (Vasan 1984, 249).[16] One measure of the consequence of Turkey's longstanding secular-

ization can be seen in the 2013 Pew poll, where only 12% of the public support the idea that sharia should be the law of the land and only 14% and 36% of the public support a role of religious leaders as judges and their involvement in politics, respectively (Bell 2013).

Conclusion

This article uses the case study of Kosovo to help delineate the role of Wahhabism in causing the primary process of Salafi radicalization. It also proposes using age-specific correlations of radicalization measures to help support the thesis that the same primary cause is behind the global Salafi radicalization phenomenon. By defining the primary cause through the generalized framework of sharia as the theme and religious leaders as its enablers, this analysis explains how Wahhabism has come to initiate the radicalization process. By further delineating primary from secondary processes of radicalization, this article provides a systematic way of conceptualizing the threat Salafi radicalism poses.

On this basis, this piece posits that a first-step global strategy geared toward mitigating the threat of Salafi jihadism would take aim at religious leaders' self-serving narrative of sharia as an all-encompassing "divine law" and undercut it with a justifiable counter-narrative in which sharia is merely a given religious leader's interpretation of Islam. The analysis presented here suggests that if such self-serving sharia narratives are undercut, Islamist religious leaders will lose their most effective platform for propagating radical ideas. The movement formed to push for sharia as the law of the land (including Salafi jihadist groups) would then likely unravel. Another appealing aspect of this strategy is that it decouples the religion's scriptures from radicalism by ascribing the latter instead to an influential community entity and an underlying ideological theme. While a review of Turkey's evolution supports the utility of this strategy, whether such a strategy could be part of a successful global de-radicalization process awaits further studies and experimentation.

The article suggests some possible future research directions. Polls or surveys that identify age-specific correlations of those who support sharia, religious leaders, and religiously motivated violence are among the most obvious ones. In particular, vis-à-vis Kosovo, such polls should be of interest in further explaining

how Wahhabi propaganda triggered radicalization.

In the physical sciences, one can often isolate and then establish causal inference through controlled experiments. While the social sciences mostly lack this characteristic, the premise of simplicity, defined through a simple and appealing theme and its enablers, can significantly narrow down possible causal scenarios by identifying one possible independent variable behind causation. In particular, the age-specific correlations may be useful in establishing internal integrity, by eliminating confounding variables and validating the external generality of an identified causal process. Whether this simplicity premise is a norm or an exception in describing social phenomena should be of further research interest.

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Endnotes

[1] One measure of the preeminence of Muslim involvement in terrorism is this statistic: A 2013 Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) report reveals that in terms of number of fatalities, eight of the top 10 terrorist groups are of the Isla-

mist variety, and they account for around 96% of all of the fatalities caused by the 10 groups (Rivinius 2014; Muthuswamy 2016, 17).

[2] These two ideologies are so similar that many authors have used the words "Salafism" and "Wahhabism" interchangeably in this context. See Ali and Sudiman (2016).

[3] There is evidence to support the premise that even the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was largely secular in its outlook. See KIPRED (2016, 30).

[4] Muslim Albanians constitute about 90% of the entire population of Kosovo. See the CIA World Factbook, available at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kv.html.

[5] See Haykel (2012) on how the Salafis interpret sharia.

[6] This article focuses on Salafi (Sunni) terrorism because it is driven predominantly by Wahhabi-based ideologies, which, unlike Shia-related terrorism, tend to be driven by state and organizational objectives, and also because Sunnis constitute over 80% of all Muslims. See Lynch (2008) and Pew Research Center (2001) on the future of the global Muslim population (available at: http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/the-future-of-the-global-muslim-population/)

[7] The Deobandis have been increasingly influenced by Wahhabis elsewhere (Puri 2009).

[8] A recent regime change has led to the religious police being stripped of their powers (Hubbard 2017).

[9] I calculated the entries in Column 5 using the following equation: Column5 entry = 100*(Column3 entry − Column2 entry*Column4 entry*0.01)/(100 − Column2 entry). Egypt, Jordan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Palestinian Territories, Iraq, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Lebanon have religious courts for family law, while the rest have secular courts for that. There is at least 10% uncertainty associated with the computed entries, and more so with those of smaller size. This error originates from the fact that many respondents refused to answer or did not know what to

answer and were included as part of the statistics of the negative response to the question (Bell 2013, 218).

[10] I am not making a significant distinction between "defensive" and "offensive" armed jihad, as such distinctions are subjective (Kepel 2003; Al-Dawoody 2013). Moreover, the same texts in the scripture can be interpreted differently to advance both violent and non-violent agendas (Wiktorowicz 2006).

[11] Sector-wise data on higher education in Pakistan. Available at: http://www.hec.gov.pk/hecdata/Pages/default.aspx (accessed January 25, 2011). The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan provided the number of doctorates awarded in the field of Islamic studies.

[12] While one could argue that the ongoing Islamist militancy in neighboring Afghanistan is having a blowback effect on Pakistan, it should be noted that if not for Pakistan's own affinity for jihad, the militancy in Afghanistan probably would not have grown to the extent it has.

[13] It is noteworthy that another 20% and 15% of the British mosques' religious leaders are from Bangladesh and India, respectively (BBC News 2007).

[14] The lone exception, Turkey, has been subjected to jihadist attacks due to its porous border with Syria, the main base of operations of the Islamic State. For strategic reasons, Turkey had tacitly tolerated the porous borders (Associated Press 2015).

[15] I calculated the entries in Column 5 using the following equation: Column5 entry = 100*(Column3 entry − Column2 entry*Column4 entry*0.01)/(100 − Column2 entry). See note 9 on uncertainties.

[16] To be sure, in the past decade, Islamist politics have made a comeback in Turkey under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) (Rabasa and Larrabee 2008). The AKP, it must be pointed out, drew its inspiration from the Muslim Brotherhood, which received generous support from Saudi Arabia in its formative years (Aydın-Düzgit 2014; Lacroix 2014).