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Militant Islam and Weber's Social Closure: Interrelated Secular and Religious Codes of Exclusion

Abstract

Weber's concept of social closure can help to illuminate the social processes that result in the development of militant Muslim groups. Adapting and applying the concept helps to establish the interrelationships between secular processes and Islamification that are designed by the militants to exclude others and usurp governments. These processes include the implementation of secularisation, conversely concessions to religion and the reinvigoration of Islamic concepts that are used as codes of closure to unite followers and ostracize other Muslims and religious denominations.

Key words

Exclusion, militant Islam, social closure, status, *takfir, tawhid*, usurpation

Introduction

In this paper, it is argued that Weber's usage of the concept of social closure can make a valuable contribution to enhancing understanding about the processes that result in the formation and reinforcement of distinct secular and militant Islamic[1] groups. The origins of the respective forms of closure and interrelationships between methods of exclusion and usurpation involving national and Western governments and militant groups are examined. Particular attention is placed upon processes of secularisation especially the role of education, that have contributed ironically to the contemporary resurgence of militancy and the adaptation of Islamic concepts like *tawhid, takfir* and *jahiliyya* as codes of closure.

The concept of social closure is commonly associated with Max Weber. Yet although Weber introduced the concept, it was arguably underdeveloped. For Weber, social closure is a process through which social groups sought to maintain and enhance their position by excluding others from access to particular rewards and privileges. Certain social or physical characteristics, which other groups possessed, would be singled out as the basis for boundary closures. Virtually any feature identifiable within a group could be chosen as the criteria for exclusion, including race, religion and social origin. The process of exclusion is designed to ensure 'the monopolisation of specific, usually economic opportunities. This monopolisation is directed against competitors who share some positive or negative characteristics; its purpose is always the closure of social and economic opportunities to outsiders' (Weber 1978: 342).

In traditional societies, Weber argues closure was based upon descent and lineage and was used to retain and reinforce resources across generations. By comparison, systems within modern societies appeared to be more egalitarian, with educational qualifications determining access to positions of power. This apparently more open system was, nearly as effective as traditional methods of exclusion. The modern methods denied the majority of the population participation in power because they did

not possess the necessary qualifications. Ownership of qualifications therefore became as important as the possession of property.

According to Weber, common identification can become the source of group closure and the monopolisation of goods, qualifications and skills. Social class became the main cleavage in society legitimised by inclusion and exclusion orientated around perceptions of egalitarianism. Crucially, for this study, Weber explained that group status closure could occur outside the market situation and it is this acknowledgement that will be further explored for militant Muslims. Through the application of an ideal type of 'status groups,' Weber was also able to extend the rules of domination and exclusion to include cultural and social facets. These characteristics are based upon a shared quality. A claim to social esteem and honour and 'above all else a specific *style of life* is expected from all those who wish to belong to the circle' (Weber 1978: 932). Relations within these groups will vary according to the extent that commonalities are shared, whether the relations are 'communal' based upon affectual, emotional or traditional bases or 'associative' based upon rational judgement and assessment of individual interests. The length of time in which status driven characteristics become embedded within the group are also instrumental in the intensity of the association. Race, ethnicity, religion, sex and credentials could all provide the basis for status and subsequently closure. However Weber's application of social closure is not without criticism[2] and there have been a number of attempts to apply and extend the concept's applicability.

Closure beyond Weber

Since Weber the concept of social closure has been underutilised. Today, a cursory glance at indices within many of the authoritative texts about Weber finds the continuing neglect of the concept. This has been partly rectified by a number of studies, particularly Frank Parkin and Raymond Murphy who have developed social closure to help explain social formations and processes. The majority of the studies have tended to apply social closure to the development of the ruling class (Scott 1982, 1991, 1997), employment processes associated with occupational practice and labour markets (Brown 2000, Kreckel 1980, MacDonald 1985) and race and sex discriminatory practices (Roscigno *et al* 2007). Parkin (1974, 1979) sought to refine and enlarge upon Weber's usage. By concentrating on the interaction between class stratification with other forms of social division like gender, race and religion, Parkin (1974: 4) sought 'to extend the notion of closure to encompass other forms of social action designed to maximize collective claims to rewards and opportunities'. Drawing upon Weber's (1978) acknowledgement that people may react against the class structure through acts of both irrational protest and rational association, Parkin includes the social reactions of the excluded within his bi polar model based upon exclusion and solidarism.

Parkin (1974: 5) explains the two forms. Exclusion is 'a form of closure that stabilizes the stratification order, solidarism is one that contains a potential challenge to the prevailing system of distribution through the threat of usurpation'. Therefore 'modes of closure can be thought of as a different means of mobilizing power for purposes of staking claims to resources and opportunities'. But without state support, the 'usurpers' have to mobilise opposition if they are to be successful in their range of

goals, which Parkin (1974: 10) suggests range from 'marginal redistribution to total dispossession'.

The distinctions between exclusion and solidarism are not without criticism. Murphy (1988) argues that both practices are seeking to exclude other groups from the available resources and involve monopolistic practices. Therefore the differentiation between the two concepts is less clearcut with both processes primarily being modes of exclusion with usurpation a sub-type for the intermediate groups.

Through the identification of differences between exclusion practices, Parkin distinguished between individualist and collectivist forms of exclusion. Collectivist criteria is based upon communal characteristics which are used as the basis for determining the transmission of advantage to a group or groups while simultaneously being responsible for other groups' exclusion, for example, gender, race, religion and lineage. Individualist monopolization is based upon protecting advantages through concepts like achievement and credentialism (Collins 1979, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Access to rewards and privileges is increasingly achieved through the acquisition of qualifications which Parkin (1974, 1979) suggests is not as effective in restricting access. In modern societies rules of exclusion have shifted from collectivist to individualist and represent for Parkin the triumph of the bourgeois in the nineteenth century against the lineage approach of the previously dominant aristocracy. Consequently exclusionary power does not emanate from one source, like ownership and the means of production for Marxists. Instead Parkin argues attention must also be placed upon credentials which also provides the basis for monopoly and exclusion.

Murphy's Social Closure

Raymond Murphy's exploration of social closure concept is probably the most extensive. He analyses both market monopolisation (by property holders) and other forms through the power and opportunities held by status groups. For Murphy (1988: 18-9), 'at the root of closure theory is the perception of the parallel between the processes of monopolisation, such as those based upon race, ethnicity, sex, religion, the Communist Party, credentials and knowledge'. Social closure is therefore about the processes of monopolisation and exclusion in the pursuit of power and the study of domination and the responsive struggle it provokes. Dominance is achieved through mechanisms of power and control that are located within the rules of exclusion. The range of groups that people belong to contribute to a multitude of experiences of both dominance and exclusion according to gender, race, property and religion; relationships that fracture stronger associations among particular excluded groups.

The 'Switchmen'

In developing a more extensive theory of closure, Murphy incorporates a range of Weber's other important sociological contributions, including one of the most famous concepts, that of the switchmen.

'Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet frequently the "world images" that have been created by "ideas" have, like switchmen,

determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest' (Weber 1958: 280). Murphy (1988: 1) interprets the tracks as 'none other than codes of social closure: formal and informal, overt and covert rules governing practices of monopolisation and exclusion'. These codes include capitalism, state socialism, patriarchy, racism, religious beliefs and meritocracy. All are forms of monopolisation that seek to exclude other groups from available resources and privileges. Contradictions begin to develop when the exclusionary codes become visible, leading to ideas forming which create contradictory 'world images' and ultimately opposing rules of exclusion or tracks. Particular ideas can create certain world images which result in specific forms of closure. The dynamic of interest then drives the determined action along the tracks, seeking to install the new world image. For Murphy (1988: 4), this is ''Weber's dialectic of material interests and ideas, the dialectic of constraint and creativity'. Social closure is therefore a dynamic, conflictual process seeking to maintain or enhance groups' shares of power and domination. Because rules of closure invariably create contradictions leading to changes, there will be reactions against perceived injustices which in turn will contribute to changes and the rules of exclusion will shift.

Rationalization of Closure

For Weber, rationality revolved around structural and individual levels. At the upper level, there is formal rationality which is based upon the calculation of means and procedures. Alongside this, substantive rationality exists which is principally the evaluated value of results. For Weber, formal rationality dominates the substantive ands its advance has led to the replacement of value based action by instrumental individual based action with magical beliefs seriously undermined. Adapting Weber's rationalization thesis, Murphy relates the development of formal rationalisation to the displacement of collectivist by individualist exclusionary criteria. Basing exclusion on individual achievement was seen to rationalise the process compared to the increasingly discredited collectivist criteria. Murphy argues that processes of exclusion changed to connect into processes of rationalisation and legitimise intergenerational inequalities. People were now selected according to skills and attributes with exclusion depersonalised and objectified and not social factors like gender, race and religion.

The process of formal rationalisation of closure and domination can, Murphy suggests, be observed in state apparatus like legal, education and military spheres. This formal rationalisation has enabled states to justify and legitimate internal domination through monopolisation of exclusion at local, national and in some instances international levels.

The principal rationalised rules of monopolisation and exclusion in the pursuit of mastery of nature and other people are based upon private property in the market and rules of bureaucracy. However, 'the rational pursuit of mastery and control is… an elusive process in which rationality, elimination of contradiction, control and predictability paradoxically result in irrationality, contradiction, unpredictability, and lack of control. This could be called the '"uncertainty principle" of formal rationalisation' (Murphy 1988: 251). In other words, claims for the legitimation of the system are based upon superior performance but if this should be considered inferior then closure processes could be threatened. Additionally the linkage between

individual progression with performance can also cause tension and conflict if the contradiction with reality is noticed.

Summary: Adapting Closure

Despite claiming that 'closure theory brings about the social determination of exclusion and its social consequences,' Murphy (1988: 47) concentrates upon economic criteria with other forms deemed secondary. Groups maybe excluded according to social formations and react to the same social situations. Ultimately though Murphy is arguing that their exclusion is based upon the distribution of resources and subsequent reactions will always be motivated towards improving their share of resources. By suggesting that private ownership is the principal[3] rule of closure for both social class and status groups under contemporary conditions, Murphy overlooks the dispersal of power to include non property owners. Within Muslim societies and communities, social class loyalties are often not instrumental within contemporary political divisions. MacDonald (1985: 541), despite concentrating upon occupational patterns, provides a useful definition that extends the applicability of the concept beyond materialism. For him, 'the essence of closure is the definition of membership at a particular point in time, and the setting of criteria for those who may join subsequently.' These rules of closure are not inevitably designed to protect or usurp material interests but can be based upon social, political or cultural criteria. Equally, as Brown (2000) identifies, closure theory has not placed enough attention on the social and economic consequences of exclusion nor upon the experiences of individuals and social groups. Brown (ibid: 639) also draws attention to the impact of globalisation (of positional competition) upon the need to extend a conceptual framework between and within societies. Finally, with the partial exception of Murphy (1988) there is inadequate attention placed on the inter-relationships between excluders and excluded and in particular the processes and experiences that result in individuals experiencing exclusion in isolation or becoming part of a groups challenging the dominant discourse.

The evolution of the concept of social closure can therefore make a useful contribution to the study of the dynamics of conflict and in particular the interwoven relationships between domination and usurpation. Within militant Islam it is argued that these processes are informed through socialisation in conditions that contribute to the 'uncertainty principle' which both undermines the dominant secularism and legitimises Islamic usurpatory challenges.

Closure within Muslim Societies

Within Muslim societies, the struggle for control is not restricted to the ownership of the means of production. Conflict is about the very essence of the state and society and is a struggle over the public and private spheres. For militant Muslims this conflict can be traced to the *Qu'ran* and *hadiths* and the early period when Islamic communal and status groups were both prominent and dominant. To understand the origins of the different perspectives into rules of closure within and against militant Islam, it is important to briefly outline changes that have occurred throughout the formation of modern states and subsequent processes of modernisation and internationalisation.

Within Islam, demarcations, between and within theological interpretations, are drawn between Good and Evil, what is permitted and forbidden. For militants the distinction is extended beyond private behaviour to incorporate cultural, economic and political behaviour. Status is attributed according to these parameters. Codes of closure result that seeks to eradicate deviations from the word of Allah, excludes those who fail to attain the required standards of piety and purpose and accepts people who emphasise ascetic discipline and theological purity. In this sense militant Muslims seek to impose a particularly prescriptive 'style of life' that both includes and isolates and they believe was prominent during the successful origins of the religion. The period when the implementation of these rules of closure was undermined is the source of considerable debate within militancy. And outside militancy as Turner (1993: 51) 'most scholars have recognised that the *Shari'a* was an ideal law which allowed a gap to emerge between ideal and practice.' Militants argue otherwise. Habeck (2006) suggests there are three main arguments, although it can be argued that these are ideal types that are not mutually exclusive and militants draw upon different aspects within the arguments. For some militants, the problem can be traced to the establishment of a hereditary Abbasid monarchy following the 'Golden Age' of Muhammed, the four righteous *Caliphs* and arguably their charismatic authority. The Abbasids introduced an unlawful system of government, creating their own rules rather than those implementing God given laws.

The second period Habeck (2006) identifies is the abolition of the Ottoman *caliphate*[4] by the Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The *caliphate* was considered to be the only universal authority for Islam, although it was not widely respected and at the time its dissolution did not cause widespread consternation (Toprak 1981, Vertigans 2003). Many militants since, including both Qutb[5] and bin Laden, have drawn reference to the event, arguing that the role of the *caliph* was central to Islam. They argue that without the *caliphate* providing the source of unification and leadership, the religion became seriously weakened.

Finally, there is a popular perception that the loss of Muslim dignity and honour was the outcome of a deliberate attempt by 'unbelievers'. Falsehood and unbelief (*kufr)* has always existed. Since the time of Muhammad the struggle with the *kufr* has concentrated upon Jews and Christians who have rejected the Truth. The crusades and colonisation of Muslim regions and contemporary processes of Westernisation, including the pervasive penetration by the media, are considered to be part of the attempt to undermine and ultimately eradicate Islam. And crucially American reactions and actions post September 2001, including the war in Afghanistan, invasion of Iraq and ongoing aggressive rhetoric against Iran and Syria, are viewed through this framework of understanding against a backdrop of crusades, colonialism and the establishment of Israel on Islamic territory. Marranci (2006) explains how the West is thought to be spreading *jahiliyya* (ignorance) weakening collective Islamic identity and which in turn contributes to feelings of anti-Semitism and anti-Westernism discussed below. In other words the problems that Muslims encounter in Muslim societies are due to external enemies and for those living in the West the foes are internal.

Secular Rules of Closure

Although there is clear disagreement within militancy about the historical origins of Islam's decline, there is common agreement that the formation of modern Muslim nation-states and in particular processes of secularisation, have undermined Islamic institutions. Theological influence was formally excluded based upon criteria established by governments causing, it is believed, immense damage to faith and the *umma* (Islamic community) generally. Islam in the post independence era, and even before in the case of Egypt (Gershoni and Jankowski 1987) was devalued, for a variety of reasons. In particular, Islam was considered to be an obstacle to modernisation, capitalist development and industrialisation. The universalism of religion meant that it was viewed to be unhelpful in strengthening the specificity of the particular nationalism being developed. Across Muslim societies administrative and legal systems were introduced based upon Western processes of rationalisation and domination. Islam was excluded through formal rationalisation, secular derived rules of closure and the emergence of associative relationships. Religion became concentrated within the sphere of individual commitment. Therefore the extent to which individual Islamic values impinged on behaviour and contradicted the secular nature of the state became a potential source of exclusion. Governments placed Islam under specific departments and were considered to be irreligious. Through processes of rationalisation, attempts were made to transform what was frequently anti-colonial nationalism that had absorbed Islamic influences into the basis for modern nation-states. Shaped to a large extent by the restrictions they were facing within the world-system, these newly formed nations were heavily influenced by the previously dominant colonial principles, practices and methods with many experiencing a history of tension between secular and religious identities. Since then, and despite the longevity of secularisation, to varying degrees these attempts have failed and arguably were rarely implemented in the Western manner. Religious institutions continued to provide spiritual and social services including education and cultural activities in regions beyond the modernising core. Yet conversely the surge of militancy appears to have gained momentum at a time when secularisation is less oppressive and Islam has been encouraged, to enhance religiosity and address social and cultural concerns.

Following the end of the Ottoman Empire, the most notable processes of secularisation were initiated by Atatürk after the formation of the Turkish nation-state in 1923. These processes followed more tentative attempts at reform undertaken by the Ottomans as they sought in vain to protect their diminishing empire. After the formation of the Turkish republic, formal laws adapting German, Italian and Swiss codes were introduced, designed to ensure consistency and stability on which to develop the nation-state and to protect the rights of individuals. As part of the management of change, the sultanate and *caliphate* were abolished and the state controlled Islamic institutions, leaders and activities. New forms of associational relations were introduced which sought to expand citizenship and remove forms of discrimination.[6] Yet despite the apparent openness of these relations, outsiders were excluded, and communal affinities associated with religion were isolated. Change was extended to the type of clothes people wore providing an easy method of establishing habits of 'taste.' New ways of domination and emphasis on a new Turkish pre-Islamic 'nationalism,' banning of religious sects, *tarikats*, and Westernisation that included the adaptation of a Latin styled alphabet meant that a distinct divide emerged between the ruling elite and the majority of the population

who were excluded from power relations. Large sections were unable to communicate with the elite nor able to engage in the new dialogue as the republicans sought to create modern citizens (Berkes 1964, Lewis 1974, Vertigans 2003). Within industrial urban regions, the rationalist reforms transformed local communities and ways of thinking, imposing their own 'styles of life' and appearance. But as Karpat (1959: 271) remarked, 'villages and small towns… continued to preserve their basic Islamic customs and traditions, and the cultural goals of secularism were only partly fulfilled.' Therefore, distinct 'styles of life' remained. With the introduction of democracy after the Second World War, rival parties were able to connect and inflame religious sentiments amongst the excluded who had not been integrated into the modern nation-state. Islam became an electoral tool for attracting political support. The use of religion was not however restricted to electioneering. A range of governments throughout the history of the republic, harking back even to the early period of Atatürk, have sought to utilise Islam to justify actions, legitimise policies and safeguard support. And religious supporters have been installed within important state institutions as part of the system of patronage employed within Turkey. The penetration by different ideological supporters and their vested interests, of course, conflicts with the Weberian hallmark of bureaucracy and the dominance of impersonal rules. In other words, the secular attempts at social closure have only been partially successful, partly because the nation-state continues to rely on religion for a range of functions. This is highlighted by Turkey being ruled by the democratically elected Justice Development Party (JDP), a mildly Islamic party whose actions are causing increasing consternation to the secular military and intelligentsia. The inner contradictions within Turkey are magnified within less secular nation-states, particularly in their approaches to education.

The Role of Education within Muslim Societies

Within the overwhelming majority of newly created Muslim nation-states, education was integral to the formation of new national consciousness. The widespread introduction also had another consequence, namely new forms of derivative and contingent codes of exclusion were implemented that placed emphasis upon credentialism and the internalisation of secular methods and values. Qualifications and other depersonalised characteristics became a standard way of establishing entry to organisations. Individualist criteria therefore became more prominent and other, more 'traditional' collectivist allegiances associated with lineage and ethic group diminished in significance, although in many instances familial and political ties retained some significance. As Parkin (1982) points out, in his critique of Weber, these rules for closure are grounded in state policies. Crucially individuals belonging to a plurality for whom Islam provided a specific style of life, and as such were part of a status group or communal relationship under Weber's classification, were increasingly isolated from political influence as secular values, institutions and ideologues became dominant. Governments sought to implement secular criteria that needed to be internalised with particular levels of competence achieved and measured through qualifications. These systems of learning would deliver graduates capable of undertaking the required roles that would enable the nation-state to develop. And at the level of the hidden curriculum, they would contribute to the development of modern, rational identities. In some respects, the intentions connect with Gellner's (1983) view that cultural homogenisation occurs as schools are introduced across

territories teaching the dominant language and emphasising national loyalties. However, in many Muslim societies this outcome has been far from universal.

The impact of educational schemes in Muslim societies is mixed. Education is paradoxically instrumental both in the formation of secular and Islamic nationalism. This is at least partly because the purely secular curricula associated with leaders like Atatürk was rarely implemented. Instead, governments sought to utilise religion within education as a means of addressing concerns over *anomie*, to offset perceived threats from other ideologies and to gain political support (Ahmad 1977, Heper 1985, Vertigans 2003). Despite their rhetoric, the secularists continued to rely on Islam for a variety of functions with their respective nation-states. In Turkey, schools and universities were key components of a modernisation scheme designed to '"Turkicize" the people, their language and their culture' (Kazamias 1966: 148) as a 'vehicle for national integration, economic regeneration and modernization' (Williamson 1987: 11). Certainly there has been a tremendous increase in the number of places at learning institutions. However, for the pragmatic reasons explained above, since the 1970s there has also been an even greater rise in religious schools and prominence of Islam within national syllabi. Other countries also sought to implement secular education but gradually became infiltrated by religious curriculum. And like happened across West Africa from the 1970s and in Indonesia in 1990, governments declared religion to be an integral part of national identity and enhanced processes of Islamification (Lapidus 2002).

The weakening of the secular codes of closure have contributed to greater opportunities for enhanced religiosity and the learning of opposing rules through Islamist teachers or institutions that challenge those of the nation-state. Crucially the enhanced learning opportunities and religious curriculum have enabled more Islamic views to develop and conversely more militant Muslims to attain the credentials required to succeed under rational criteria. Yet many well qualified Muslims have been denied employment opportunities due to their collective religious beliefs. Such a denial highlights the inconsistencies and contradictions within the rationalisation principles and 'closed nature' within associational relations and the related adapted secular processes were further de-legitimised. Conversely militants who attain influential employment following graduation can utilise these positions to work towards enhancing radical discourse.

Exclusion Beyond

For many migrants to the West and subsequent generations, racism and forms of covert discrimination provide barriers to integration and strengthen existing social and cultural networks. The rise of Islamophobia has resulted in many Muslims uniting around that which leads to their exclusion, namely their religion which becomes the basis for communal and status groups. Marranci (2006) points out that despite Muslims being born in the West their loyalties are being questioned. The overwhelming majority have not given any cause for nation-states to be concerned yet government and societal reactions are contributing to processes of exclusion and the re-examination of identities. Today, Muslims are living in the West where both they, and often their parents and even grandparents, were born. Yet the experiences of many Muslims have resulted in their exclusion from economic, cultural or political spheres. These experiences contribute to opposition to tenets of Westernisation and

open, associative relations that have failed to deliver or have been shown as inconsistent, flawed or closed through discrimination. Applying Weber (1978), the Western authorities could be considered to have cloaked themselves with the myths of their legitimations but increasingly groups refuse to endorse or accept their legitimacy. Instead these Muslims demand the imposition of many of their specific ways of life associated with the *shari'ah* like alcohol ban, gender segregation and the *nijab*. And consequently become increasingly segregated into what Weber (1978: 933-4) described as a 'closed caste' in a diaspora based upon repulsion and disdain that excludes exogenous marriage and social intercourse.

Militant Codes of Exclusion and Usurpation

Reaction to the exclusion of radical interpretations from within both Muslim majority societies and minority communities, increasingly utilises the concept of *tawhid*, one-ness of ideas and behaviour. In other words, there is a stress on uniformity in thought and practice amongst believers that is contradicted by the multitude of Islamic beliefs and behaviour across the world. However there are commonalities and militants have transformed the concept. For them, unlike the overwhelming majority of believers, *tawhid* has been politicised, justifying a range of control mechanisms and acts of violence. Shared structural experiences, including economic factors alongside political, legal, social and cultural, are contributing to the formation of rival switchmen, world images and codes of closure. The rules are based upon Islamic interpretations that are expected to be rigorously followed. In the Weberian sense, the emphasis upon life-styles provides a moral framework and the basis for positive group status that distinguishes these Muslims from 'inferior' people with different beliefs and behaviours. In a similar manner to that identified within the changes imposed by Atatürk, specific styles of dress become symbolic of the militants' status. Taheri (1987) discusses Sheikh Ragheb Harb from Hizbollah's comment that the individual should lose their identity within the community with no moment or act left to the individual's initiative. Imposing one-ness has often become the responsibility of state or self declared guardians of morality who patrol areas, enforcing behaviour and appearance boundaries and punishing difference. Attacks on buildings associated with alcohol, dancing, prostitution, cinemas, girls education, mixed gender restaurants and men and women who are 'un-Islamic' in appearance and strong opposition[7] to the Sufi veneration of saints and pilgrimages to the tombs of holy men have been noted across Muslim societies ranging from North Africa to North Caucasus and South East Asia. Similarities within one-ness are thus given their distinction through clarifying both strengths and weaknesses that result in inclusion and exclusion. Consequently within militancy some of the regional variations, particularly with regard to local cultic practices, are being eradicated which strengthens the sense of similarity between militant groups.

Problems within Muslim societies and communities in the West are associated with processes and factors like modernisation, globalisation, unrepresentative governments, weak civil societies, powerful military and corrupt leaders experienced or witnessed at local, national or international levels. And these problems contribute to what Murphy (1988) described as the 'uncertainty principle' and perceptions that processes of rationalisation have caused irrationality, confusion and contradiction. In these environments, collective ethnic consciousness that may have existed during anti-colonial movements has frequently not been transformed sufficiently into social

national consciousness. By comparison, Islamic interpretations remained throughout processes of modernisation, deeply ingrained within social processes and traditions, retaining the potential for radical mobilisation if secularisation should be seen to have failed. And the nation-states formal processes are failing to deliver promises of superior performance and related rules of closure are de-legitimised. For Muslims, the poor performance extends beyond market economics to cause tension across all aspects of society where Islam has not been applied.

Within militancy, the concept of *takfir* is central to the exclusion and usurpatory processes, meaning 'that one who is, or claims to be, a Muslim is declared to be impure: by *takfir* he is excommunicated in the eyes of the Community of the Faithful' (Kepel 2004a: 31). For many militant Muslims, this means that the person is no longer defended by Islamic law and they are condemned to death. Approaches to *takfir* can be divided into three ideal types. Isolationism advocated by the Egyptian group Takfir wal-Hegira based upon *hegira,* fleeing to the mountains from the unbearable *jahiliyya* society. To remove themselves from the corruption and immorality, the group stated they were driven to 'go into the desert and live among the beast in order to protest the purity of our faith' (quoted in Taheri 1987: 19).

Secondly, struggles against the 'near enemy,' local impiety and rulers who are excommunicated, have happened across Muslim societies like Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Government codes of exclusion are considered secular, inappropriate and to have failed. Militant groups have formed with contradictory 'world images' and opposing switchmen. In the Algerian civil war during the 1990s, the GIA expanded the use beyond the 'impious state' to include society. In the districts it controlled, it imposed a "re-Islamisation" of society and punished with death civilians who defied its injunctions such as women who refused to wear the *hijab*, hairdressers who ignored orders to close their shops and newsagents who continued to sell the national newspapers' (ICG 2004b: 13). After the further radicalisation and fragmentation within the GIA, between 1996 and 1998, militants employed an extreme conception of *takfir* against all those who refused to support them, irrespective of the individuals' religiosity, and thousands of people were massacred.

Finally there are the trans-national approaches associated with al-Qa'ida that rallies against the seizure and maintenance of power by Western influenced governments, global impurity and responds by targeting non-Muslim infidels and non-Militant Muslims who are considered to be apostates. Within this politicised context, *jihad* is central in challenging *takfir*. Groups have argued that this is the only appropriate course of action because violence is the only language the West understands.[8] Comparisons are drawn between the similarities of the pride, arrogance, greed and thievery of the Bush administration and that in Muslims military regimes and kingdoms.[9]

To try ensure control over issuing the sentence of *takfir*, only the *ulemas* have been authorised to make such pronouncements and they have done so with great caution, usually as a last resort. Even Wahhabis who have a reputation for readily dismissing non-Wahhabi Muslims as *takfir,* tend, Steinberg (2006) suggests, to be circumspect about excommunication. Certainly the rigidity and separation espoused by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab were lessened with the formation of the Saudi nation-state although

Shi'ites have continued to be considered to be apostates and rejectionists (Solomon 2006). Today however, disillusionment many feel for the religious establishment[10] and their role in providing theological legitimacy[11] for unpopular regimes has meant that there is scope for unqualified group leaders to make these accusations in seeking to eliminate the threat of disbelief and prevent its spread. For Qutb,[12] the loss of faith was so extensive that Muslims were living in a state of ignorance or even pre-paganism. Consequently believers should not cooperate with those involved in the society and should instead seek to impose the *Shari'ah*.

The Role of Nation-states in developing Militant Islamic Codes of Closure

By adapting classical religious concepts, militant Muslims are seeking to both legitimise their processes of exclusion and methods of usurpation. Rules of exclusion are against Muslims and other religious denominations in a usurpatory manner that helps to strengthen militant status. However there is not an inevitable collision between militants and other denominations. For example, groups like Hamas (1988) state that it is possible for Muslims, Jews and Christians to coexist peacefully within the Middle East providing the other religions acknowledge the sovereignty of Islam in the region. And it is possible to observe pragmatic relationships that do not revolve explicitly around religion between Hizbollah and Christian groups in Lebanon and within Islam, Hamas and Islamic Jihad undertaking operations with the more secular al-Aqsa Brigades and PFLP. But generally emphasising religion within national or trans-national parameters excludes people belonging to other denominations or weaker interpretations. People, communities and nation-states associated with Christianity and Judaism in particular are ostracised through processes also associated with anti-Westernism and anti-Semiticism. In conducive conditions, these rules transcend passive forms of exclusion into violence and ultimately closure through death. Processes of dual closure can be found between secularists and militant Muslims using a mixture of discourse and methods to isolate and exclude. Muslim nation-states are further contributing unintentionally towards these processes.

In Saudi Arabia the balancing act between the Kingdom's self declared role as defender of the faith and close Western ally is notable in the seemingly contradictory approach to anti-Westernism. While opposition to anti other Islamic allegiances has lessened, partly through the networks established across Muslim societies and through migration into the country, Steinberg (2006) argues that they have been replaced by varying degrees[13] of anti-Western attitudes, with xenophobia prominent in Arabian regions. Within the Najdi region, anti-Americanism is extended to incorporate the Saudi royal family because of their close relations with the United States and the considered role of the latter in protecting the former. Across the country the West generally, and America in particular, is considered ethically and morally weak. Religious institutions are prominent within anti-Western sentiments, for example, the most widely read scholars of the twentieth century, especially Abd al-Aziz Ibn Baz (died 1999) and Muhammed Ibn Uthaimin (died 2000) made numerous anti-Western judicial rulings. In the edicts, drawing upon a Qu'ranic verse, Muslims are told not to travel to non-Muslim countries, not to make friends with, or trust, infidels. As Steinberg (2006: 82) comments, 'the anti-Western stance adopted by the country's leading scholars is problematic because they control the religious sector of the Saudi educational system and have considerable influence on the non-religious branch.' However the support that the religious scholars provide to the Saudi government's

pro-Western foreign policy contradicts their internal policy and has contributed to them reinforcing anti-Westernism without addressing the lack of endorsement of their own legitimacy and tarnished status. Periodic attempts are made to curtail the influence of the Wahhabi scholars on education and public discourse but these have proved only partially successful and are quickly overridden. In Saudi Arabia, the internal dynamics facing the regime has contributed to support being provided in exporting Wahhabi based education and other institutions across the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, North Caucasus, Europe and West Africa both to enhance Saudi influence and counteract the threat of Iranian influence. At one level, this expansion of Wahhabism and related learning institutions has caused conflict within other Muslim societies and communities. Rigorous, collectivist interpretations of the Wahhabis as a style of life frequently challenges the indigenous Sufi and marabout strands that incorporate the veneration of saints, pilgrimages to local tombs and mysticism and were attributed by Weber (1965) to be an enemy of asceticism. The reverse of this approach is that it also extends the dilemma that Saudi Arabia faces internally, namely the paradox on which it is based and the standards it promotes but cannot meet. These incompatibilities become visible to a wider audience and further undermine the regime's rationale and legitimacy for global leadership.

Other Muslim governments, with close relationships specifically with the United States seek to overcome the common perceptions of themselves as American satellites or stooges and are complicit within processes of anti-Americanism specifically and anti Westernism generally. Contradictory policies are followed that seek to restrain militant anti-Western rhetoric and actions while simultaneously tolerating, if not encouraging, anti-Americanism within the media and public demonstrations. As Abdallah (2006: 46) comments with respect to Egypt, 'the paradox of Mubarak's regime is that of an era in which Egyptian-American relations were consolidated at economic and military levels although political discourse and media exposure became more anti-American.' In other words, regimes are seeking to retain secular based rules of closure whilst simultaneously promoting alternative codes over particular issues.

In these environments, people holding different religious beliefs can become legitimate targets. Within the recent turmoil in Somalia the enactment of a constitution that recognises only Islam as the national religion formally excludes other religions and has contributed to ingrained anti-Christian feelings. Terdman (2006) argues that these feelings stem from colonialism and the banning of Christian literature during Said Barre's rule during the 1970s and 1980s with over 500 Christians killed since 1995. Similarly in countries where Muslims are the minority, Islam has become a mobilising discourse within nationalist struggles and the source of legitimacy in attacking representatives of the dominant 'other'. For example in Nigeria, the establishment of a Universal Primary Education in the 1970s was considered by many Muslims to be part of an attempt to enhance Christianity at the expense of Islam. In the northern states where Muslims are concentrated there were concerted efforts to strengthen Islamic institutions and behaviour and a concomitant rise in the politicisation of religion. During the 1980s, the tensions over spilled and violence between Muslims and Christians became regular occurrences. As Lapidus (2002) observes, while the fighting has reduced the tensions remain and have been exacerbated by the implementation of the *shari'ah* in the north.

Exclusion within

Divisions within Islam are most notable around the *Sunni/Shi'ite* fracture currently contributing to the sectarian violence in Iraq.[14] These differences are embedded within the application of codes of exclusion within and between religious denominations and groups. For example, in Pakistan groups like Sipah-e-Sahaba and Jaish-e-Muhammad are vehemently anti-*Shi'ite* and have been responsible for brutal massacres. It is important to stress that this is not universal.[15] However rigid rules of closure are also noticeable within the binary classifications *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb* or the House of Islam and the House of War. The former refers to those territories governed by the *shari'ah* whilst the latter is the remaining territory that is controlled by non Islamic rule and is thus *jahiliyya*. This highly contested usage of *jahiliyya* differs from the traditional approach and is another innovation associated with Qutb and his adaptation of Syed Abu A 'La Mawdudi (Zimmerman 2004). Calvert (2004) points out that use of the term shifted from a temporal meaning that distinguished Islam from the pre-Islamic epoch to the application against forces that prevented the implementation of the *shari'ah* throughout history. These forces were deemed especially prominent by Qutb during his lifetime with particular reference to the Nasserist state,

> The Muslim *umma* is a collectivity of people whose entire lives – in their intellectual, social, existential, political, moral, and political aspects – are based on Islamic ethics. Thus characterized, this *umma* ceases to exist if no part of the earth is governed according to the law of God any longer (Qutb quoted in Kepel 2005: 43).

Developing this point, Qutb argued that 'any society that is not Muslim is *jahiliyya'* (quoted in Kepel 2005: 46). And most militants agree that there are no territories governed according to (their interpretations of) the *shari'ah* with Islam inadequately implemented across societies and within individual habits of taste. Consequently as Habeck (2006) observes they focus upon achieving this and create separation between supporters of true Islam and *kufr* which includes other Muslims. Religion is firmly intertwined with politics. Any individual or institution can now be declared *takfir*. Muslims, even Islamists are subjected to attack if they criticise the *jihadis*. For example, on the al-Tajdeed militant website, Amir Abd al-Mun'im confronts those 'in the movements that call themselves Islamic… that desire to profit from Islam yet do not wish to make sacrifices on Islam's behalf' before denouncing those Muslims who have criticised the *mujahideen* that includes bin Laden, al-Zawahiri and Zawqawi.[16] Yet within al-Qa'ida there has been a tendency to focus on the death of Jews and Crusaders while the killing of other Muslims has been opposed. This can be traced to the influence of Azzam and although al-Zawahiri in particular considered his definition of *jihad* to be too defensive and reactive, al-Zawahiri has retained a perception of the need for sectarian restraint, famously reprimanding Zarqawi in Iraq for the extensive killing of *Shi'ites* (Brisard 2005, Gerges 2005). And support for the *Shi'ite* Hizbollah during the 2006 conflict with Israel, despite opposition from some groups, was noticeable across Muslim communities, both *Sunni* and *Shi'ite*. Similarly Hizbollah has historically had close relations with Sunni Hamas and Islamic Jihad from the neighbouring Palestinian territories.

By comparison, Zarqawi in Iraq extended the term unbeliever to also include *Shi'ites, Sunni* Kurds and other Muslims associated with the American 'collaborators' or who did not adhere to his Salafi perceptions (Brisard 2005). The targeting of local Muslims, both *Sunni* and *Shi'ite* can also be noticed in attacks on Muslims during localised conflicts in places like Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Morocco and Indonesia. Gerges (2005) discusses Osama Rushdi, a former member of the Shura Council of the militant *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyah* and the role he ascribes to Dr Abdel Aziz bin Abel Salam, founder member of Tanzim al-Jihad. Salam it is argued introduced, what Gerges (2005: 97) describes as, 'a blanket takfeeri judgment' that applied to all those Muslims who did not join in the battle against 'apostate' rulers and who were as a consequence 'impious'. This extensive use of *takfir* was to supply the justification for massacres by the GIA in Algeria. Similarly Devji (2005) has pointed out how, despite considerable commonalities, the language and tactics of *jihad* have been used against *Shi'ites* according to collectivist criteria.

Conclusion

Weber's social closure provides an insight into the historical and contemporary processes behind the exclusion of militancy and the establishment of usurpatory militant codes of closure. Following the formation of independent Muslim nation-states in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire and Western colonialism, an array of different ideological stances, structures and levels of secularisation were introduced to enable modernisation. Processes of rationalisation were implemented to help develop the nation-state based around associative relations and individualist criteria. However, increasingly the secular codes of exclusion were compromised and governments sought to utilise religion within cultural and social realms. The unintended consequence of this utilisation has been the reinvigoration of Islamic influence in challenging political discourse that establishes different rules of closure that are more absolute and opposed to the nation-states. Many problems remain within these nations and communities and national consciousness has frequently failed to attract widespread endorsement. Instead, across Muslim societies and communities in the West there has been a growth of collective consciousness and common identity of interests. Self conscious religious groups and institutions have utilised traditions, community relations, common feelings and patterns of behaviour across socio-economic groups. Education has contributed to credentialism and both national and Islamic consciousness. These sources of identification crosscut economics to incorporate political and cultural consciousness which can result in formal rationalisation being undermined. If peoples' experiences indicate governments' failure to deliver promises and inconsistencies within credentialism then the dominant codes of closure are undermined and vulnerable to challenge.

Today more Muslims are willing to adopt 'world images' that form the basis for exclusionary codes that challenge those of the dominant nation-state and associated (*Sunni*) religious leaders. They contribute to the reinforcement of 'otherness' amongst people belonging to different faiths. These militant Muslims object to the monopolisation of closure according to secular nation-state criteria. And despite a weakening in the rigidity of secularisation, they demand the implementation of largely fundamentally opposing values and ways of regulation. The expected evolution of codes of closure from social to individualist criterion has been reversed. Rules have shifted from credentialism to religious denomination and within this code, Islamic

interpretation and practice that forms the criteria for membership and associated status. Formation of these boundaries results in rigid codes of exclusion of 'pariah' groups and the strengthening of exclusivity within, resulting in further distanciation. A dynamic conflict emerges over the processes of domination and the nature of society. For trans-nationalists associated with al-Qa'ida, globalisation that impacts upon both non Muslims and Muslims who do not share the share beliefs and commitment are excluded and frequently excommunicated, to be punished by the most ultimate form of closure, death.

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[1] Militant Islamic groups are defined as those wanting to implement Islam as a way of life and are willing to use violence in order to achieve this. The most obvious example are groups associated with al-Qa'ida.

[2] For example, Blau (1977) and West and Zimmerman (1987), highlight how exclusion also needs to be examined within the context of everyday interaction and the use of language, symbols, control and violence, Parkin (1982) notes that the role of the state in the closure process is understated and Murphy (1988) challenges Weber's (and Parkin's) over emphasis upon education.

[3] Murphy also includes state ownership within the communist bloc that existed at the time of writing.

[4] Islamic government controlled by Muhammed's successor (*caliph)*.

[5] Sayyid Qutb (1906-66) is an inspirational figure, providing radical reinterpretations that have been instrumental in reinvigorating militancy.

[6] For example, women were granted the rights to divorce, inheritance and to stand for election (Davison 1990, Vertigans 2003).

[7] In this respect the militants are in agreement with Weber's (1965) argument that the Sufi brotherhoods mysticism prevents asceticism.

[8] For example, al-Zawahiri (2001) has raised this matter in detail.

[9] Bin Laden (2004) discusses these issues in his intervention in the 2004 American Presidential election.

[10] Further details can be found in Ayubi (1991), Devji (2005), Hiro (2002), Kepel (2004b, 2005) and Milton-Edwards (2005). Again differences can be noticed within militancy. For example, Gerges (2005) describes how the Egyptian group al-Jama'a al-Islamiya has reversed the tendency to discredit the *ulema* by arguing that *jihad* is a collective duty determined by qualified and representative religious scholars.

[11] Bin Laden has sought to exploit the distance of many *ulema* from the populace by openly criticising their engagement with corrupt kingdoms and dictatorships and most notably their role in providing a judicial decree in support of the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia.
[12] Qutb died before fully developing the concepts of *jahiliyya* and *takfir* and a range of different approaches exists within contemporary militancy.
[13] Steinberg (2006) points out that perceptions of the West vary across the country according to a range of variables like differing relations with the Saudi government, economic infrastructure, exposure to pilgrims and migrants, local histories and tribal loyalties.
[14] *Sunnis* constitute around 85 to 90 percent of all Muslims and *Shi'ites* between 10 to 15 per cent. The division is rooted in the struggle over Muhammed's succession and the criteria on which his successors should be appointed.
[15] For example, despite involvement within the sectarian Lebanese civil war, Hizbullah has since encouraged Muslim-Christian dialogue, the identification of common denominators and peaceful resolution of conflicts across Christian denominations (Qassem 2005).
[16] Comments reported in Ulph (2006).