

## **Framing, new social identity and long-term loyalty. Hizb ut-Tahrir's impact on its members.**

Elisa Orofino

### **Abstract**

The present paper explores the role of the radical non-violent Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir in retaining long-term member loyalty. More specifically, this study explores Hizb ut-Tahrir's framing of the group and the creation of a deep-rooted social identity that fosters loyalty and long-term membership among its associates. Starting with a review of the relevant scholarship on frames and social identity, this paper explores the origin of Hizb ut-Tahrir's frames—the group's *Aqeedah* (doctrine)—and the consequent set of values that define HT members' social identity. This paper concludes that while frames are essential in the creation of a new social identity that strongly binds the individual to the group, two mechanisms produce HT members' loyalty over the long run: self-efficacy and positive intergroup differentiation. These mechanisms account for Hizb ut-Tahrir's appeal and activities in more than 45 countries around the world, where the group represents the choice of all those segments of Muslim diaspora communities who might agree with Islamist arguments but who strongly reject the use of violence.

**Keywords:** Vocal Islamist Groups, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Framing, Values, Social Identity.

### **Introduction**

The activities of Islamist groups in the West have long been a source of concern for both national governments and civil society. Committed to resisting modernity, colonisation, and the failure of political leaders in the Middle East, Islamist groups strongly advocate for a revival of Islam in all fields (political, economic, social, and religious), stressing the need to return to the roots of the religion and its holistic implementation as a *din*, i.e. a way of life.

While these ideological foundations and goals might be shared among the wide plethora of Islamist groups operating today, their methodology represents the major factor differentiating them. In fact, all Islamist groups agree on the need to eventually re-establish the caliphate (*khilafah* or Islamic State) and fully implement *shari'a* (Islamic law) in order to drive the global *ummah* (Muslims around the world) away from Western corruption. Nevertheless, they are not unanimous on how to achieve these goals. Over the past 20 years, scholarship has given much prominence to the study of violent (*jihadi*) Islamist groups providing useful insights on their structure and their appeal to Western Muslims (Chassman, 2016; Jacoby, 2017; Khalil, 2017; Lankford, 2018; Phillips, 2017; Stuart, 2017).

In parallel, very little attention has been devoted to the broad universe of 'vocal radical' Islamist groups (Wali, 2016, p. 102). This expression refers to all those Islamist groups espousing a strong anti-Western and anti-integration stance without engaging in violent activities. The few recent studies available on these groups (Ali & Orofino, 2018; Karagiannis, 2018; Khalil, 2014; Orofino, 2015, 2018; Nawab, 2018; Peucker, 2018; Sinclair, 2018; Yilmaz, 2010) have shown how vocal radicals often appeal to those Muslims who share the ultimate goals of terror groups, but who strongly reject the killing of innocents.

Hizb ut-Tahrir (literally 'The Liberation Party') is very representative of the large cohort of vocal radical movements.<sup>1</sup> Active since 1953, the group has witnessed a rapid global expansion reaching over 45 countries worldwide. The group has not only survived persecutions and bans, but it has also continued to attract members in different national contexts.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, HT members

---

<sup>1</sup> The terms 'group' and 'movement' are used as synonyms throughout this text.

<sup>2</sup> HT is banned in at least 15 countries around the world, including many Muslim-majority countries, such as Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and Uzbekistan (Counter Extremism Project, 2017; Emont, 2017). The Hizb is also banned in Turkey, Russia, China, and Germany where it was deemed 'anti-Semitic and dangerous' (European Court of Human Rights, 2012). Other countries like the United

(Hizbis) represent a living exception that refutes the unavoidable path from radicalisation to terrorism, as they are radical and extreme (in terms of ideology) but do not engage in or condone violent activities.

One of the most interesting aspects of Hizb ut-Tahrir (henceforth HT or the Hizb) is the fact that members tend to remain loyal to the group for their entire life. Many leaders of HT branches in the West joined the movement when they were at university and have never left.<sup>3</sup> Why? What is so appealing about HT to new members? And what mechanisms has the movement implemented over the years to ensure the development of long-term loyalty among its members?

This paper aims to answer these questions by analysing HT's framing activities. More specifically, this study explores the core elements used by HT to build a solid 'social identity' for its members and develop the mechanisms that foster HT members' long-term loyalty to the group. First-hand data were used for this study, gathered by the author during fieldwork in London and Sydney (between October 2015 and May 2016). In addition to interviews with 16 members of HT Australia and observation at HT-sponsored events in both cities, data was also collected from 14 books constituting HT's official adopted literature,<sup>4</sup> as well as 400 Facebook posts, 50 visual posts on YouTube, and 150 news comments on the group's websites (HT Australia, HT Britain, and the Central Media Office).

---

Kingdom, Denmark, and Australia have considered banning HT several times as a hub of 'preachers of hate' but have not done so, apparently fearing a possible backlash of negative reactions from other Islamic revivalist groups presenting themselves as mere intellectual groups.

<sup>3</sup> Some well-known examples include Abdul Wahid (HT Britain), Hamzah Qurechi, and Uthman Badar (HT Australia).

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed list of An-Nabhani's main writings see *The books of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, Daily Islam. Available: [www.daily-islam.com/2016/01/the-books-of-hizb-ut-tahrir.html](http://www.daily-islam.com/2016/01/the-books-of-hizb-ut-tahrir.html)

Thematic analysis was conducted and results showed how HT's continuous framing activities create a strong bond between the individual and the movement's *'Aqeedah* (doctrine), which constitutes the basis of Hizbi-sponsored social identity. Once established, this new social identity produces loyalty towards HT, which is maintained in the long run through two core mechanisms: self-efficacy and positive intergroup differentiation.

### **Social Movements and the power of 'framing'**

Intended as 'networks of interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared identity' (Diani, 1992, p. 15), social movements (SMs) have the intrinsic need to regulate the behaviours of their members in order to secure a coordinated, effective, and durable action against their perceived enemies or competitors.

For this purpose, SMs continuously familiarise their members and new recruits with their ideology, main tenets, and goals within a process called 'framing' (Benford & Snow, 2000; Gamson, 1992; Parsons, 1949; D. A. Snow & Marshall, 1984). The latter produces collective action frames, which slowly become the main force regulating the life of a person. Frames are schemata of interpretation that enable individuals 'to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large' (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614; Goffman, 1974)

As a result, once absorbed by the members, frames strongly impact their vision of the world, their priorities, and their idea of right and wrong. Frames are essential for the leadership of the movement as they serve vital purposes, such as recruiting new members, mobilising adherents, and strengthening their loyalty (Snow & Benford, 2000). Frames are also employed to identify problems, who or what is to blame, and to suggest a viable solution. Given that conflict with authorities is an essential feature of SMs, frames are what clearly differentiate SMs from the formal establishment, defining their essence as alternative models to national and international authorities (Perry, 2018).

Moreover, frames shape social categories—such as religion, gender, and ethnicity—setting the boundaries between the in-group and out-group, defining the imaginary borders inside of which the individual lives his/her life. Once endorsed by the individual, precise frames and social categories rigidly dictate his/her behaviour, preferences, and solidarity. Therefore, the framing process defines the core element of the individual's new social identity and the specific sets of values it is grounded upon.

### ***Social identity, terminal and instrumental values***

The framing process, the related collective action frames, and social categories define the core elements the so-called *social identity* of an individual that is strongly connected to the movement (s)he is part of (Melucci, 1980). Social identity derives from 'the persons' knowledge that they belong to a certain group together with 'some emotional value and significance to them of this group membership' (Tajfel, 1972, p. 72).

This is what distinguishes social movements from any other kind of collective action: social identity endures over time and conditions. For instance, as Perry (2018) notes, the main element that differentiates social movements from coalitions is their lack of social identity, which allows movements to continue to exist after specific campaigns. Through a continuous process of framing, SMs define the core elements of social identity as the rock upon which the movement exists, expands, and functions.

More specifically, social identity consists of two sets of values SMs carefully and continuously frame: instrumental and terminal values. While terminal values are the goals of the movement, which serve as guiding principles for members, instrumental values are the modes of behaviour a group advocates for, such as respect for authority, tradition, and hard work (Kenney et al., 2013). Since all members of the movement should have a clear understanding of the two sets of values characterising the group, the leadership often establishes specific norms and rules useful for developing the instrumental values the movement has adopted.

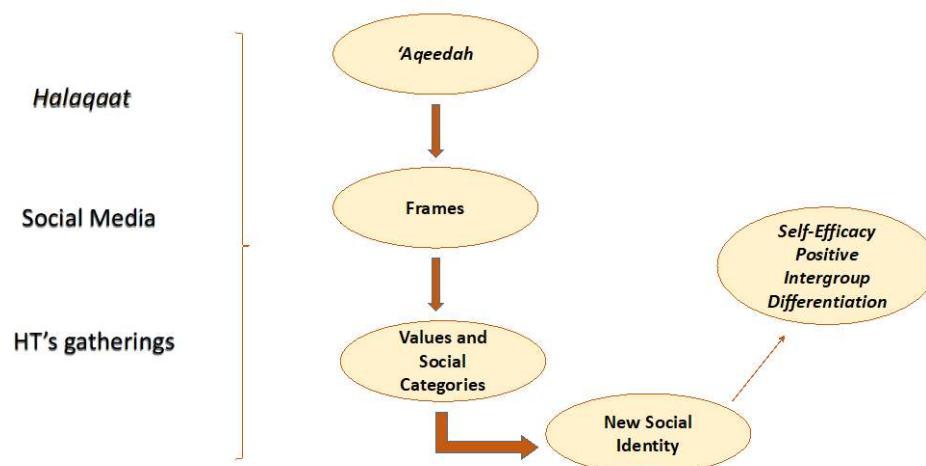
As most values are not written down, instead existing as ‘norms, beliefs, assumptions, and ways of thinking and acting that people within a group use to relate to each other and to the outsiders’ (Jones, 2007, p. 179), a continuous interaction between senior and new members takes place. New members are influenced by senior members’ conduct, beliefs, and ways of addressing problems and undergo a process of learning these unwritten norms. Through a process of continuous framing, members of the movement internalise constitutive values, which become part of their worldview and thus affect their interpretation of reality.

### Revisiting the origin of Hizb ut-Tahrir’s frames

#### *The ‘Aqeedah*

As mentioned before in this paper, HT’s ‘*Aqeedah* (doctrine) represents the source of the movement’s framing process and is the heart of HT’s values, meaning, and goals.

**Figure 1** *Hizb ut-Tahrir’s Framing Process*



**Figure 1** provides a visual representation of HT’s framing process where the ‘*Aqeedah* stands at the top as the origin of all HT’s collective action frames. The movement’s doctrine was first elaborated by the founder—Sheikh Mohammed Taqiuddin an-Nabhani— and its core elements

have remained unchanged. First among them is HT's strong rejection of political authorities other than the Caliph. As all SMs, HT has a conflictual nature and identifies the West and corrupt Arab rulers as its main enemies (Hizb ut-Tahrir, 1996; Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain, 2017; Hizb ut-Tahrir Lebanon, 2008). Since its early days, HT mirrored the convictions of its founder; An-Nabhani who believed that Western expansion in the Middle East was the main cause of decline within the Muslim world, culminating in the fall of the last caliphate in 1929 (An-Nabhani, 1998, 2001, 2007).

Not only did An-Nabhani consider the West as a dangerous political, social, and economic system feeding the hearts and minds of Muslims with concepts contrary to Islam (such as democracy and personal freedom), but he also regarded Arab rulers as responsible for fostering the Islamic decline (An-Nabhani, 1998). On this subject, An-Nabhani believed that Arab rulers had placed personal gains and power before the well-being of the *ummah* (global community of Muslims) and their religious duties. HT's founder thought that Arab rulers had exposed their people to great dangers, implementing democratic reforms leading to the fall of the only system of government implementing *shari'a* and protecting Muslims, i.e. the caliphate (An-Nabhani, 1998, 2002).

Given that following *shari'a* in every realm of life was regarded as a religious obligation for all Muslims according to An-Nabhani, he decided to create HT as a protest-for-justice movement aimed at re-establishing the caliphate (An-Nabhani, 2001; Taji-Farouki, 1996). Strengthened by a continuous framing process for both old and new members, the aim of the group has remained unchanged since 1953. This aim constitutes the second core feature of HT's '*Aqeedah*': all HT branches around the world need to be committed to challenging the West in all areas (religion, politics, and education) by reviving Islam through a revolution of thoughts leading to the re-establishment of the caliphate (An-Nabhani, 2001; Orofino, 2015). As envisaged by An-Nabhani, the Hizbis still believe that their revolution will undergo three crucial stages: the 'culturing stage, the interaction and the revolutionary stage' (An-Nabhani, 2007; Hamid, 2016, p. 39).

In the ‘culturing’ stage, HT leaders convey collective action frames to a selected number of individuals who will serve as the first ‘nucleus’ to then spread the message to the broader society (An-Nabhani, 1998). The interaction stage begins as soon as the nucleus reaches out to the broader Muslim community, attempting to intellectually persuade them to accept its ideological tenets and to participate in activities aimed at re-establishing the caliphate. When the majority of society, including political and military leaders, are persuaded that the caliphate is the only viable system for Muslims to live in, the revolutionary stage is ready to begin. HT leaders will seize power by overthrowing allegedly corrupt governments and establishing the Islamic state (An-Nabhani, 2007; Hamid, 2016; Punkhurst, 2016).

As envisaged by An-Nabhani, the revolution will be non-violent thanks to the preparatory framing activities conducted by HT aimed at convincing more and more Muslims of the great value of HT’s plan to revive the *ummah* and the glory of Islam. HT activists often clarify that the caliphate they wish to re-establish will not be a global caliphate, but only restored in specific areas of the Muslim world, called *majaal* (Hanif, 2014, p. 312). This is where the revolution will take place and where activists will spread their frames among civil society, politicians, the army, and even imams. This is what HT leaders wish to happen in countries like Pakistan, a Muslim-majority territory where HT is currently banned.

Despite the ban, activists carry out leaflet campaigns, online campaigns, talks, and study-groups to persuade both the people and the army (the main authority of the country) on the importance of re-establishing the *khilafah*, often risking their lives, suffering torture and prison (Marwa, HT Australia, personal communication, March 12, 2016). Conversely, in *non-majaal* areas (the West included), HT activists still conduct a continuous framing activity but with a different purpose. If in *majaal* areas, the main goal is to convince all Muslims to take part in the revolution against political authorities to re-establish the caliphate, in *non-majaal* areas HT aims to raise awareness among the Muslim diaspora communities of the alleged urgent need to re-establish the



caliphate in the Middle East. In so doing, the movement encourages Muslims in the West to think of the *khilafah* as home, triggering a progressive disenfranchisement from the local context. Although the West is a more liberal environment for the movement, HT activists often keep a low profile to avoid further checks and ban.<sup>5</sup>

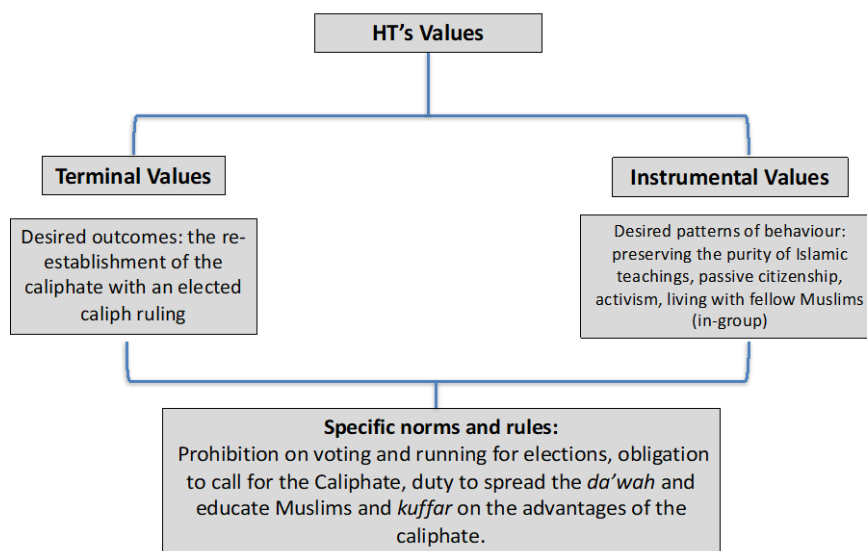
---

<sup>5</sup> Significant differences emerged from the comparison between HT Britain and Australia (Orofino 2018, 2020). While in Britain HT gatherings are not publicly advertised and HT spokespersons often join other groups' events to speak about their ideals, in Australia HT openly publicises its activities, gatherings and even rallies. One reason behind these differences can be the harsher European attitude towards HT culminated in the group-ban in Germany and Russia.

## HT's terminal and instrumental Values

As anticipated above, HT's *Aqeedah* determines the group's terminal and instrumental values through a continuous framing process, which constitutes the Hizbis' social identity. While the terminal values refer to the goals of the movement (as guiding principles for members), instrumental values concern the behaviours members should adopt to achieve those goals (Kenney et al., 2013). **Figure 2** provides a visual illustration of HT-specific terminal and instrumental values as well as specific norms and rules that reinforce them (Orofino, 2020).

Figure 2 Hizb ut-Tahrir's Values



HT's primary goal (terminal value) is the re-establishment of the *khilafah*, uniting all Muslims under an elected and just leader: the caliph. While the group has other minor goals—such as educating the masses—the re-establishment of the caliphate has primary importance. Over the years, HT leadership developed specific behaviours that serve as instrumental values towards this goal. Among them is the need for the Hizbis to live according to HT's understanding of pure

Islamic teachings and to reject the Western ‘illegitimate’ nation state system (Badar, 2012; Doureihi, 2017; Orofino, 2015)

The illegitimacy of the Western nation state system in the eyes of the Hizbis derives from the very constitutive elements of democratic states: man-made laws and the protection of personal freedoms. Both elements are regarded by the movement as deeply inconsistent with Islam. The movement instead supports *shari’a* instead of man-made laws and submission to God instead of personal freedom. Therefore, all branches of the group globally are committed to opposing the alleged ‘illegitimate system’.

The conflictual relationship with Western authorities has been an intrinsic characteristic of HT’s *Aqeedah* since it was founded, and today HT members globally continue to show their dissent through relentless anti-Western propaganda, accompanied by passive citizenship (Turner, 1990). The latter describes HT members’ lack of participation in activities such as voting, running for elections, and supporting political parties. Unlike other Islamic revivalist groups—such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami—HT has remained consistent over the decades in its rejection of any form of political participation for its members other than dissent.

Although the name Hizb means ‘party’, HT has never participated in local politics through the creation of Islamist parties advocating for the implementation of *shari’a*. HT’s instrumental values of keeping the purity to highlight the illegitimacy of the West as a system encouraged a strong uncompromising stance uncommon among other similar Islamic revivalist groups operating internationally, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami. While sharing the same desire of reviving Islam, both groups accepted the nation-state system (regulated by man-made laws rather than by Islamic ones), deciding to play according to its rules by sponsoring political parties and competing for power. The Muslim Brotherhood sponsors several parties in Muslim countries, such as the Iraqi Islamist Party, Hadas (Kuwait), and the Movement of Society for Peace (Algeria).

Jamaat-e-Islami has also engaged with the electoral process and has enjoyed a high degree of support in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka since the 1950s (Iqtidar, 2011). This shift towards political participation in a system that is not regulated by *shari'a* has triggered a strong sense of antipathy in Hizbis towards both the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami, which are regarded as 'inconsistent and away from the truth' (Khalida, HT Australia, personal communication, April 6, 2016).

The third core HT-specific instrumental value is activism in the group. Members, both senior and new recruits, are called to dynamically operate within the movement in various ways, according to their hierarchical levels, capacities, and commitment to denouncing the 'evils in the West,' while emphasising the immediate need for the caliphate (Mahmoud, HT Australia, personal communication, March 18, 2016). Again, HT's terminal value of re-establishing the caliphate serves to promote activism among members of the group.

Some of the most common activities for members include leaflet campaigns, organising conferences and talks, and spreading the call to Islam (*da'wah*) to both non-Muslims and Muslims with views different from HT. Amina, a member of HT Australia for over 12 years, spoke fervently of the need for all HT members to work hard to achieve the common goal:

We all need to work for the cause of Allah (swt), to set Muslims free from oppressors all over the world...the re-establishment of the caliphate is not a preference, it is a necessity because it is the only system able to assure protection to Muslims [...] all brothers and sisters should work towards this aim—according to their capabilities and means available—and their efforts will certainly be rewarded by Allah (swt)...(Amina, HT Australia, personal communication, April 9, 2016).

The re-establishment of the caliphate is a promise of Allah (swt) and it will be the only system with a just and pious leader who cares about his people (Khalida, HT Australia, personal communication, April 6, 2016)

Amina was 32 years old at the time of the interview and had been a member of HT Australia since she was 20. Her words confirm HT members' goal of re-establishing the caliphate—the terminal value of the organisation—as the top priority. Amina developed this conviction during her first encounters with HT, which led to her membership in the group. Before discovering HT, Amina

had never thought about the caliphate as a viable political system in the contemporary global context. Amina's experience reveals HT's framing activity, instilling new meanings and values in its members. Amina's view on the caliphate was fully shared by Khalida, another HT Australia senior member. For both women being a Muslim implied to work for the re-establishment of the caliphate as part of their religious duty to abide by Islamic law. The convictions of the two women reflected the group's general belief that the caliphate will be the only system of government grounded on divine justice and therefore able to meet the needs of all people.

With the overarching aim of re-establishing the caliphate in the background, HT also encourages its members to live with fellow Muslims, especially with other people from the organisation to reinforce this shared worldview. Living in communion with other Muslims represents the fourth instrumental value promoted by HT, namely making a clear distinction between the in-group and out-group, while fostering members' solidarity and a sense of belonging entirely to HT and the global *ummah*. HT supports a clear separation from the *jahili* (ignorant people, far from the truth), using this term to refer to non-Muslims as well as Muslims who are not part of the group.<sup>6</sup>

The Hizbis' holistic vision of the world leaves no room for more moderate versions of Islam. Since the group is regarded by its associates as the only righteous one, which encourages good and forbids evil, all other Muslims who do not live abiding by the divine law in the way that HT does or who do not engage in the struggle for the caliphate (as a religious prescription) are considered by the Hizbis as living in a state of ignorance towards their religion and their obligations to God.

---

<sup>6</sup> The term *jahili* derives from *jahiliyyah*, which refers to the state of ignorance characterising unbelievers (Suarez-Murias, 2013).

## **The Role of ‘*Aqeedah*: an indissoluble bond between the individual and the movement**

Both terminal and instrumental values, as well as the whole framing process carried out by HT, originate from the movement’s doctrine, the ‘*Aqeedah*. Sheikh an-Nabhani had a clear vision of how to transform the group’s tenets into its members’ priorities, shaping their conduct and creating a new social identity. HT’s founder strongly believed that if the individual was not fully educated on the ideological tenets of the group—but only on some general notions—(s)he would not be able to fully embrace its terminal and instrumental values and would end up leaving the group for something more convenient or attractive (An-Nabhani 2001). For these reasons, An-Nabhani identified the ‘*Aqeedah* as an essential pillar upon which HT’s framing had to be built to create the perfect bond between the member and the movement:

The group then requires a Hizbi bond to connect the individuals who have embraced both the idea and the method. This Hizb bond is the ‘*Aqeedah*, from which the outlook of the Hizb and the culture that characterizes the Hizb’s concepts emanate. The Hizb group will thus proceed in the mainstream of life once it is formed. During this process, the Hizb will encounter many situations, face many obstacles, and be exposed to many different environments. In other words, the circumstances around it will fluctuate from hot to cool. If the Hizbi group manages to withstand these conditions, then its idea will become crystallized, its method clarified, and the group will have succeeded in preparing its members and strengthening the bond of the group. It will then be able to take the practical steps in the *da’wah* [call to Islam] and the activity. At this point, it moves from being a Hizbi bloc to a fully-fledged ideological Hizb working towards revival (An-Nabhani 2001, pp. 19-20).

As stressed by An-Nabhani’s words, the understanding and acceptance of ‘*Aqeedah* is self-empowering for the Hizbis and generates strong bonds between the individual and the movement itself, without intermediaries. When a person becomes a full member of HT, (s)he fully acknowledges the Hizb as an essential part of his/her life, independently from current leaders or other members. Members usually continue their work within the organisation for years, since HT’s ‘*Aqeedah* is important for members on a personal level and as part of their religious commitment as Muslims.

*Halaqaat* (study-groups) is the core tool used by the HT to convey specific frames grounded on the ‘*Aqeedah*. Held once a week in senior members’ homes, *halaqaat* gather up to five people and are led by a *Mushrif* (teacher) who teaches the main ideological tenets of the organisation and the group’s adopted literature. Given the importance of *halaqaat* in developing a ‘correct Hizbi

personality' (Leyla, HT Australia, personal communication, March 19, 2017), both senior members and new recruits attend the study-circles regularly.

Although *halaqaat* play a major role in HT's framing activity, the relentless online efforts of the movement are also worth mentioning. HT has a massive online presence with national official websites in all countries where the group is still legal and a global official website aimed at conveying a sense of unity to the group (<https://hizbuttahrir.org/>).<sup>7</sup> Besides official websites, HT uses a number of other channels—not formally related to the group—which are best accessible from the countries where the group is banned.<sup>8</sup>

The group also carries out its framing activities on social media (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube), daily sharing posts and opinions exalting the beauties of the caliphate, the importance of re-establishing it for the *ummah*, and the hardship faced by Muslims living in the West. Either through official websites, non-official channels, or through social media accounts, the group continuously sponsors its terminal values, presenting its priorities as religious duties as well as assuming the role of the 'only blessed leader for change'<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> Examples of national HT websites include the UK branch (<http://www.hizb.org.uk/>), the Australian branch (<http://www.hizb-australia.org/>), and the US branch (<https://hizb-america.org/>).

<sup>8</sup> In addition to the official websites, some HT-affiliated channels are Women & Shariah (<https://www.facebook.com/WomenandShariah/>) and the Muslimah Media Center (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgQBZ25YtDcm8hpCsey67w>).

<sup>9</sup> As highlighted in Hizb ut-Tahrir's official website Home Page (<http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/EN/>), the organisation has adopted a specific verse of the Qur'an ('And let there be [arising] from you a group inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful', Qur'an 3:104) to strengthen its position as the only legitimate leader of a blessed change.

## **Ensuring Long-Term Membership**

As discussed so far, the Hizbis' social identity is grounded in the movement's '*Aqeedah*, which determines the collective frames of action, terminal and instrumental values, as well as specific social categories that together define the core elements of HT social identity. The latter is conveyed through a continuous process of framing, which takes place either through *halaqaat* but also through social media and HT-sponsored regular gatherings. As a result of this framing process, their newly acquired social identity will lead the Hizbis share several stances.

Firstly, all HT members will have strong anti-Western and anti-democratic views since both the West and democracy are regarded by HT's leadership as *haram* (forbidden) concepts. For this reason, no HT member would ever take part in the electoral process (neither as a candidate nor as a simple voter) within the state (s)he lives. Rather, the specific frames deriving from '*Aqeedah* continuously conveyed will lead the individual to focus on what (s)he perceives as life-priorities, such as purity, education on Islamic matters, escaping the dangers of conforming to Western norms, and working for the re-establishment of the caliphate.

Once these priorities are endorsed by the individual and the HT-sponsored social identity is the guiding force for his/her life, it is very difficult to change direction, not only because the individual begins to consider him/herself as an 'extension of the collective whole' (Al-Raffie, 2013, p. 78), but also because two mechanisms function to consolidate HT social identity and ensure members' long-term loyalty. These mechanisms are self-efficacy and positive intergroup differentiation.

### ***Self-Efficacy***

Full membership within HT happens once a person has embraced the '*Aqeedah* as something personal as well as the connected set of HT-sponsored values (terminal and instrumental). These values will determine his/her behaviour and are constantly reinforced by the framing process. As mentioned above, collective action frames make people's behaviour consistent



over time as they determine specific social categories, which influence the way the individual sees reality and interprets facts.

HT-sponsored social categories significantly impact the way members see themselves and evaluate their actions vis-à-vis other actors from the outgroup. The analysis of interviews with current HT members confirmed this point stressing the Hizbis' perception of their work within HT as very effective. More specifically, HT members are persuaded that their membership to HT is the most effective approach to following the divine will as well as the only way to maintain the purity of Islamic teachings. Thematic analysis of the data gathered revealed that this strong conviction of self-efficacy rooted in the Hizbis is based on three main claims: HT's methodology is based on the Prophet's example, the re-establishment of the caliphate is a promise from God, and the caliphate is the only system capable of protecting the global *ummah*.

With regard to the first claim, the Hizbis strongly believe that their movement is the only one that faithfully follows the example of Prophet Mohammad: 'HT is different from all other groups advocating for the *khilafah* because it has a clear methodology, close to Islam and the example of the Prophet' (Noura, HT Australia, personal communication, April 9, 2016). Noura is a senior member of HT Australia, a relentless activist and a frequent speaker at women's events. Her conviction that HT is based on the Prophet's methodology is shared among all members of the group and was initially conveyed in An-Nabhani's analysis of the method of the Prophet in his book

*The Islamic State:*

In the beginning the Messenger of Allah (saw) would visit people in their homes, telling them that he has been commanded by Allah (swt) to worship Him and to associate none with Him. He (saw) openly invited people to Islam...every time someone embraced Islam, Allah's Messenger (saw) would join him in the house...teaching this group of Muslims, leading them in prayers... motivating their souls, strengthening their belief through prayers and recitation, helping them to improve their way of thinking and to reflect on the verses of the Qur'an and the creation of Allah (swt) (An-Nabhani, 1998, pp. 4-5).

Interviewees from HT Australia pointed to this specific extract from An-Nabhani's book, highlighting the desire of HT's founder to build his group on the same principles of Prophet Mohammad when he spread Islam among the *kuffar* (unbelievers). The same conviction is shared

by HT members in the UK. Senior members from both countries specifically emphasised An-Nabhani's focus on ideas rather than violence, the importance of teaching Islamic principles, and the role of HT as an educator of the masses to lead the *ummah* to ideas and concepts consistent with Islamic teachings (Bsis, 2015; Nawaz, 2009; Wahid, 2016). The second element enhancing self-efficacy among HT members' is the belief that the caliphate will be re-established because it was promised by Allah, and working to re-establish the caliphate has a divine reward. As stressed by Leyla:

We are certain the caliphate will be re-established because that is a promise from God in the hadith of the Prophet...in HT we have a clear picture of what are our priorities on earth based on our focus on the afterlife: we want to please Allah (swt) and do His will...since living within the caliphate is a divine command we know that we are working for the right thing and we will be rewarded for it (Leyla, HT Australia, personal communication, March 5, 2016).

Leyla's words revealed a very linear logic: the more the individual engages in divinely established tasks, the greater his/her reward will be. All HT members would probably agree on the fact that they are 'working for the right thing' because of the very nature of the caliphate: the Islamic system of governance envisaged by God himself. Given that divinely assigned tasks are inherently effective, since they are ordered by God, the promise for a divine reward along with efforts to re-establish the caliphate fuel the increasing self-efficacy of the individual within HT.

Lastly and strongly connected to the second element, the Hizbis' self-efficacy is also fuelled by their belief that they are working to re-establish the only system that can protect the global *ummah*. HT carries out a precise narrative built on the idea that Muslims living in Western countries are in danger, both morally (contamination from *kuffar* thoughts and practices leading Muslims away from their *din*) and physically, by pointing to the many instances of Islamophobia in the West (Hizbut-Tahrir Britain, 2016; Hizb ut-Tahrir Central Media Office, 2016).

These convictions emerged in the analysis of the data—both in the interviews and in online posts by British and Australian Hizbis—where emotional expressions like 'We are living in a dictatorship against Muslims, the caliphate is the only solution' or 'To work for our *ummah* around the world is our duty, and the only way to protect them and us is to have the caliphate back' were

often repeated (Farah & Nuha, HT Australia, personal communication, March 17, 2016). HT's frames and values serve as conveyors of precise social categories, such as the role of the caliphate as the protector of Muslims.

Members of HT are honoured to work for what they perceive as a noble aim, and they feel positive and gratified knowing that their efforts will lead to the re-establishment of the Islamic state. Khalida's conviction reveals the unmeasurable value the caliphate has for her:

The *khilafah* is the only system of justice in every realm of life where social justice is achieved by assuring every person the satisfaction of basic needs, such as the right to a home, food, and a job...this will be possible through an equal distribution of the revenues coming from several resources: not only from zakat but also from revenues regarding oil and gold (Khalida, HT Australia, personal communication, April 6, 2016).

Khalida envisaged that, once re-established, not only will the Islamic state provide physical protection for Muslims, but it will also assure that the basic needs of all citizens are met, such as the need for 'home, food, and a job.' HT members like Khalida believe strongly in the value of their efforts and the rationality of their plan, and their divinely inspired method guarantees long-term membership. At the same time, these convictions provide activists with a sense of fulfilment and gratification from being on the 'right path,' approved by God and in-line with Islamic teachings.

Given that the individual is not on the right path as a single individual but as a member of the group, (s)he will have no reason to leave HT if (s)he maintains the same social categories discussed above, which are consolidated by the enhanced self-efficacy that the single member develops over time.

### ***Positive Intergroup Differentiation***

Together with self-efficacy, positive intergroup differentiation works as a powerful mechanism to foster the Hizbis' long-term loyalty to their group. As soon as a member fully embraces HT's values as his/her own, (s)he begins to develop a positive image of the group, differentiating it from similar movements. This positive intergroup differentiation stands as the second variable used here to illustrate how HT consolidates its members' long-term loyalty. The

Hizbis develop the conviction that their group is the only legitimate and effective movement within the broad context of Islamic revivalist groups. It emerged from the data collected for this study that the positive intergroup differentiation of the Hizbis is grounded on three main elements: HT's plan, its uncompromising stance, and its longevity.

HT members are proud to state that their movement differs from all other groups that advocate for the caliphate because it is the only group with a plan as highlighted in an interview with Mohammad of HT Australia.

We do not theoretically call for the re-establishment of the caliphate, as many other groups do...what differentiates us from the others is the consistent plan that we have to bring the caliphate back (Mohammad, HT Australia, personal communication, March 19, 2016).

The plan Mohammad speaks of is embedded in the methodology elaborated by An-Nabhani in many of his writings (An-Nabhani 1998, 2007, 2002, 2001). The Hizbis see other long-established groups calling for the caliphate—such as the Muslim Brotherhood or Jamaat-e-Islami—as inconsistent, conceptually confused, and lacking a viable strategy. In contrast, HT members see their group as having a detailed method to re-establish the ‘Second Khilafah Rashidah based upon the Method of Prophethood’ (Hizb ut-Tahrir Central Media Office, 2016).

HT's current method is the same as the one proposed by the founder An-Nabhani in his seminal book *The Islamic State* (1998) and relies upon three main phases: acculturation (selecting intellectuals and familiarise them with the Hizbi culture through a period of study), interaction (the first nucleus of intellectuals who have espoused HT's tenets are called to export them to the *ummah* so that Muslims become aware of their state of oppression and start viewing HT as their leader towards a ‘blessed change’), and ruling (acquisition of authority at the top state level in the Muslim world after the *ummah* has accepted the Hizbi values and shares its vision of the caliphate).

Each of these phases was described in detail by An-Nabhani and is fully accepted by members as effective. HT is the only Islamist group advocating for the caliphate that not only has a precise method to re-establish the caliphate, but also has a constitution mapping out how to make

the caliphate work effectively. The first version of the ‘Proposed Constitution for an Islamic State’ was issued just after the creation of the Party (in 1953), and an English version appears as an appendix in An-Nabhani’s book *The Islamic State* (1998).

In the constitution nothing is left to chance: all crucial elements on which the caliphate depends are carefully established, including education policy, the social system, and all figures ruling under the elected caliph. The major role played by Islam is stated in the first part of the constitution (General Rules), which gives prominence to *shari’a* and to Islamic principles (An-Nabhani, 1998). The second element fuelling HT members’ positive differentiation is HT’s uncompromising stance, which has remained unaltered over decades. As mentioned earlier in the paper, the Hizbis are proud to have maintained their positions on topics such as political participation and the use of violence. As stressed by Farah (senior female member of HT Australia):

We are rooted in Islamic teachings and in the method of the Prophet...Islam does not change, neither do we...unlike other ‘pseudo-Islamist groups,’ we have remained anchored in our principles over the decades showing stability and reliability (Farah, HT Australia, personal communication, March 12, 2016).

The Hizbis share the vision of Islam as an unchanging *din*. Therefore, they think that if it is really rooted in the true tenets of Islam, an Islamist group would have no reason to change over time or to adopt more moderate positions. Hence, HT members see their uncompromising stance as an advantage over other similar Islamic revivalist groups (like the Muslim Brotherhood) that have engaged in democratic systems and in what Hizbis would define ‘*kuffar* practices’ (Awad, 2016).

Lastly, the Hizbis’ positive intergroup differentiation is also based on the longevity of HT. Not only does HT have a plan and is uncompromising and stable in their view, but it has also been on the global scene for more than six decades. HT has survived harsh persecution all over the world and has continued to expand its activities even in the most hostile contexts. The impression one has when speaking with current members or listening to their speeches is that they have great admiration for their group and consider it the only one capable of preserving the true essence of an uncompromising Islamic revivalist group while expanding globally. This sense of admiration is

rooted in the indicators highlighted by HT's founder for evaluating the effectiveness and health of a movement over time:

If Hizb ut-Tahrir is based on a correct program, it will have the following characteristics: Vitality, hence it grows; Progress, allowing it to advance from one stage to another; Dynamism, enabling it to deal with every aspect of society, and to move to any place in the country; and Sensitivity, enabling it to sense and feel all that happens in society and to influence society (An-Nabhani, 2001, p. 35).

Current members of HT believe that their group still has the characteristics envisaged by An-Nabhani (vitality, progress, dynamism, and sensitivity), and they argue that these unique features have been essential for HT's global expansion and survival. Furthermore, HT members see their movement as vibrant, given HT's global presence and the fact that it has progressed through its phases, especially in the Muslim world where HT leaders hope to soon establish the caliphate. As stressed by Uthman Badar, one of the leaders of HT Australia, in his interview with the author:

In Muslim countries, HT aims to bring the *da'wah* to those who are in power so that they can initiate a revolutionary process to re-establish the caliphate. For instance, in Pakistan the army runs the show...so, HT goes to the General (who is a Muslim) in order to convince him that he needs to live under the caliphate to fulfil his Islamic obligations...we are currently in this stage in Pakistan [bringing the *da'wah* to the army] each country is different and moving from a stage to another really depends on the local context (Uthman Badar, HT Australia, personal communication, March 12, 2016).

According to Badar, HT looks forward to implementing the third phase of their plan in the Muslim world because it will be the heart of the second caliphate. For this reason, members, who are usually locals but sometimes also accompanied by foreign HT delegations, frequently work with the authorities to familiarise them with the Hizbi vision so that they might acknowledge the urgent need for an Islamic state. Badar's words are also connected to the third and fourth criteria set by An-Nabhani concerning the effectiveness of a movement, namely dynamism and sensitivity.

While dynamism is related to the ability of a group to address every aspect of society and maintain a widespread presence in a territory, sensitivity relates to the power of a group to grasp the important troubles in the society in which it is established so that the group can make an impact. HT has proven its ability to exercise pressure on local authorities (in both authoritarian and democratic governments) and to point out the main problems affecting a country, analyse them, and suggest an

alternative model that can address the major issues of the contemporary world, while continuing to teach and spread information on the important past achievements of the Muslim world within the caliphate.

These actions, relentlessly carried out globally, serve to ‘tick the boxes’ of An-Nabhani’s established criteria for the effectiveness of a group. The Hizbis see these criteria as prerogatives of their movement and are certain of HT’s uniqueness and effectiveness in pursuing its goal; for these reasons members generally have no intention of leaving the Hizb.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This paper examined HT’s framing process and its constitutive elements and identified HT’s ‘*Aqeedah* (doctrine) as the linchpin of the framing process from which HT’s collective action frames originate. By exploring the main points of HT’s doctrine (best elucidated in the founder’s writings, which have remained central since the early days of the movement), this analysis revealed the goals and aims of the movement and how these are translated into a specific set of values (terminal and instrumental) and social categories. Together, values and social categories form HT’s new social identity for the members.

This new social identity is based upon a strong bond between the individual and the movement, which is continuously being built and reinforced by the framing process. This analysis has also elucidated how HT’s social identity is maintained by members in the long-run through two mechanisms: self-efficacy and positive intergroup differentiation. Both contribute to strengthening the conviction that membership to HT is the only effective way for a Muslim to advocate for the global *ummah* worldwide and to live in line with the will of God. For this reason, members will be more inclined to stay in the group.

## References

- Al-Raffie, D. (2013). Social Identity Theory for Investigating Islamic Extremism in the Diaspora. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 6(4), 67-91. doi:10.5038/1944-0472.6.4.4
- Ali, J. A., & Orofino, E. (2018). Islamic Revivalist Movements in the Modern World: An Analysis of Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, Tabligh Jama'at, and Hizb ut-Tahrir. *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*, 31(1), 27-54. doi:http://doi.org.10.1558/jasr.35051
- An-Nabhani, T. (1998). *The Islamic State*. London: Al-Khilafah Publications.
- An-Nabhani, T. (2001). *Structuring of a Party*. London: Al-Khilafah Publications.
- An-Nabhani, T. (2002). *The System of Islam* (Translated from the Arabic edition ed.). London: Al-Khilafah Publications.
- An-Nabhani, T. (2007). *Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir* (English Translation). London: Al-Khilafah Publications.
- Awad, F. (2016, 13 March). *The Historical Lead-up: Political Events Leading to Destruction*. Paper presented at the 92 Years since the Caliphate: the History of the Collapse and the global Muslim Response, Lakemba, Sydney (Australia).
- Badar, U. (2012). How to implement Islam radically and comprehensively | *Khilafah Conference 2012* [YouTube Video] Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2MxIbVPgzM>
- Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 611-639. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.611
- Bsis, I. (2015, 5 November). Paper presented at the Citizens Not Subjects: Empowering the Community, London.
- Chassman, A. (2016). Islamic State, Identity, and the Global Jihadist Movement: How is Islamic State successful at recruiting “ordinary” people? *Journal for Deradicalization*, Winter(9), 205-259.
- Counter Extremism Project. (2017). *Hizb ut-Tahrir*. Retrieved from <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/hizb-ut-tahrir>
- Diani, M. (1992). The Concept of Social Movement. *The Sociological Review*, 40(1), 1-25. doi:10.1111/j.1467-954X.1992.tb02943.x
- Doureihi, W. (2017). HTA Conference Hatred Rising Living Islam in a hostile West. Talk 3 | Embracing and Confronting Reality [Video].
- Emont, J. (2017, July 19). As Indonesia Targets Islamist Hard-Liners, Even Rights Groups Object. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/19/world/asia/indonesia-hard-line-islamist-ban.html>
- European Court of Human Rights, (2012, June 12). *Decision on Hizb ut-Tahrir and Others against Germany*. Retrieved from <http://freecases.eu/Doc/CourtAct/4581998>.
- Gamson, W. A. (1992). The Social Psychology of Collective Action. In A. D. Morris & C. M. Mueller (Eds.), *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (pp. 53-76). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of the Experience*. New York: Harper Colophon.
- Hamid, S. (2016). *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists: The Contested Ground of British Islamic Activism*. London, New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd.



- Hanif, N. (2014). *The Securitisation of Hizb ut Tahrir. A Comparative Case Study*. (Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in International Relations), University of London, Royal Holloway.
- Hizb ut-Tahrir. (1996). *The American Campaign to Suppress Islam*. London: Al-Khilafah Publications.
- Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain. (2016, September 9). Football Hooligans Kick Heavily Pregnant Muslim Woman in Stomach "for Wearing Niqab" Veil in Barcelona, [News Desk]. Retrieved from <http://www.hizb.org.uk/news-watch/football-hooligans-kick-heavily-pregnant-muslim-woman-in-stomach-for-wearing-niqab-veil-in-barcelona/>
- Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain. (2017). The Will of the Ummah for Khilafah Cannot be Broken [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.hizb.org.uk/viewpoint/the-will-of-the-ummah-for-khilafah-cannot-be-broken/>
- Hizb ut-Tahrir Central Media Office (Producer). (2016). Muslim Youth - Pioneers of Real Change Conference. [YouTube video] Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRU73rU0GA8>
- Hizb ut-Tahrir Lebanon. (2008). O People of Lebanon: Reject the Leaders of the Sectarian Parties and those who trade in War [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/en/index.php/leaflet/lebanon/10.html>
- Jacoby, T. (2017). Culturalism and the rise of the Islamic State: faith, sectarianism and violence. *Third World Quarterly*, 1-19. doi:10.1080/01436597.2017.1282818
- Jones, G. R. (2007). *Organizational Theory, Design and Change* (fifth ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Karagiannis, E. (2018). The Activism of Hizb ut-Tahrir. In E. Karagiannis (Ed.), *The New Political Islam: Human Rights, Democracy, and Justice*. (pp. 53-73). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kenney, M., Horgan, J., Horne, C., Vining, P., Carley, K. M., Bigrigg, M. W., Braddock, K. (2013). Organisational adaptation in an activist network: Social networks, leadership, and change in al-Muhajiroun. *Applied Ergonomics*, 44(5), 739-747. doi:10.1016/j.apergo.2012.05.005
- Khalil, J. (2014). Radical Beliefs and Violent Actions Are Not Synonymous: How to Place the Key Disjuncture Between Attitudes and Behaviors at the Heart of Our Research into Political Violence. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 37(2), 198-211. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2014.862902
- Khalil, J. (2017). The Three Pathways (3P) Model of Violent Extremism. *The RUSI Journal*, 162(4), 40-48. doi:10.1080/03071847.2017.1365463
- Lankford, A. (2018). Identifying Potential Mass Shooters and Suicide Terrorists With Warning Signs of Suicide, Perceived Victimization, and Desires for Attention or Fame. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 1-12. doi:10.1080/00223891.2018.1436063
- Melucci, A. (1980). The New Social Movements: A Theoretical Approach. *Social Science Information*, 19(2), 199-226.
- Nawab, M., (2018). Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and Political Islam: Identity, Ideology and Religio-Political Mobilization. London: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9781351240222
- Nawaz, N. (2009) "Arguments for the re-establishment of the Caliphate" Dr Nazreen (Hizb ut-Tahrir) interview on BBC. Nahda Productions.
- Orofino, E. (2015). Intellectual Radicals challenging the State: the Case of Hizb ut-Tahrir in the West. *Contemporary Social Science*, 10(4), 401-412. doi:10.1080/21582041.2016.1236212

- Orofino, E. (2018). *Longing for the Caliphate while living in the State: an Agent-Structure Analysis of the Appeal of Hizb ut-Tahrir to Muslims in the West*. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/11343/213195>
- Orofino, E. (2020). *Hizb ut-Tahrir and the Caliphate*. London: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780429268892
- Parsons, T. (1949). *The Structure of Social Action*. New York: Free Press.
- Perry, D. L. (2018). *The Global Muslim Brotherhood in Britain: Non-Violent Islamist Extremism and the Battle of Ideas*. London: Routledge.
- Peucker, M. (2018). On the (In)compatibility of Islamic Religiosity and Citizenship in Western Democracies: The Role of Religion for Muslims' Civic and Political Engagement. *Politics and Religion*, 1-23. doi:10.1017/S1755048317000700
- Phillips, B. J. (2017). Do 90 Percent of Terrorist Groups Last Less than a Year? Updating the Conventional Wisdom. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1-11. doi:10.1080/09546553.2017.1361411
- Punkhurst, R. (2016). *Hizb ut-Tahrir: The untold Story of the Liberation Party*. London, United Kingdom: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd.
- Sinclair, K. (2018). What they really want is a Caliphate! British Salafi Reactions to the Arab Spring. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 1-11. doi:10.1080/13602004.2018.1466489
- Snow, D., & Benford, R. (2000). Comment on Oliver and Johnston: Clarifying the relationship between Framing and Ideology. *Mobilization*, 5(1), 55-60.
- Snow, D. A., & Marshall, S. E. (1984). Cultural Imperialism, Social Movements, and the Islamic Revival. *Research in Social Movements, Conflict, and Change*, 7, 131-152.
- Stuart, H. (2017). *Islamist Terrorism: Analysis of Offences and Attacks un the UK (1998-2015)*. Report. London: The Henry Jackson Society.
- Suarez-Murias, A. (2013). "Jihad is the Way and the Death for the sake of Allah is our highest Aspiration": A Narrative Analysis of Sayyid Qutb's Milestones. (Master of Arts), Wake Forest University Winston-Salem, North Carolina.
- Tajfel, H. (1972). Experiments in a Vacuum. In I. Joachim & H. Tajfel (Eds.), *The Context of Social Psychology: A Critical Assessment* (Vol. 7, pp. 69-119). Oxford, England: Academic Press.
- Taji-Farouki, S. (1996). *A fundamental Quest: Hizb al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate*. London: Grey Seal.
- Turner, B. S. (1990). Outline of a Theory of Citizenship. *Sociology*, 24(2), 189-217. doi:10.1177/0038038590024002002
- Wahid, A. (2016). Why I Joined Hizb ut-Tahrir [video]: Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain. Retrieved from <http://www.hizb.org.uk/videos/dr-abdul-wahid-why-i-joined-hizb-ut-tahrir>
- Wali, F. (2016). Functionality of Radicalization: A Case Study of Hizb ut-Tahrir. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 10(1), 102-117. doi:http://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.10.1.1525
- Yilmaz, I. (2010). The Varied Performance of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Success in Britain and Uzbekistan and Stalemate in Egypt and Turkey. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 30(4), 501–516. doi:10.1080/13602004.2010.533448