



COUNTERING ISLAMIC STATE IDEOLOGY:
VOICES OF SINGAPORE RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS

"Countering Islamic State Ideology: Voices of Singapore Religious Scholars edited by Muhammad Haniff Hassan and Rohan Gunaratna is an important work proving that the Islamic State (IS) is a master at propagating "fake news". Reading Hassan and Gunaratna's timely book will explain how the IS manipulates passages from the Qur'an and other theological texts out of context to fit its own quest for followers and power. The authors also advance the notion that countering IS is best done by Muslims whose interpretations of Islam's theological works are predicated on forgiveness, hope, prosperity and peace. A must read for seekers of truth."

Brigadier General (Ret) Russel Howard
Distinguished Senior Fellow, Joint Special Operations University,
and, Founder Director, Combating Terrorism Center
United States Military Academy, West Point

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WITH A FOREWORD BY
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Preface

Mohamad Hasbi Bin Hassan

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
 اللهم صل على سيدنا محمد الفاتح لما أغلق والخاتم لما سبق ناصر الحق
 بالحق الهادي إلى صراطك المستقيم وعلى آله حق قدره ومقداره العظيم

Over the past few years, we have been grappled with alarming reports on the capture of Singapore Muslims who have been exposed to radical ideologies and propaganda while searching to deepen their understanding of Islam through misguided online sources instead of seeking knowledge through conventional proper methods and accredited sources and teachers.

These individuals represent neither the Muslim faith nor any part of it. They are misguided and have brought with them a distorted understanding and portrayal of this faith, causing an imbalance to the way of peace and harmony that Allah ﷻ has revealed to humankind demonstrated in the Prophetic ﷺ teachings and methodology.

Allah SWT has mentioned in the Holy Qur'an mentioned in surah Surah Al-Anbiya' Verse 7:

فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“... then ask those who have knowledge of the Scriptures”.

This verse clearly indicates for us to increase our understanding and knowledge by seeking out teachers, so that we may attain clarity on the doubts and confusions that we have. Individuals, who became radicalized, tend to steer away from seeking the proper explanation on certain content of a Prophetic ﷺ teaching and focus only on the text or content without embracing the essence demonstrated in the Prophetic ﷺ methodology. Paired with confusion, lack of meaning and purpose in life, they tend to develop a sense of low-esteem in themselves and making them vulnerable to the extremist ideas and thoughts that they discover online.

The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam. It does not represent Islam. Instead, it represents evil, arrogance, ignorance, and skepticism clouded with narcissism and absolutist beliefs. Islam teaches us to read, ask, ponder, and be mindful of one's thoughts and actions. Teachings us to prioritize growing our humanity within us and remain humble and be a fountain of hope and compassion for all.

The Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers (Pergas) applauds this valuable contribution, a documentation of research and articles by a group of accredited asatizahs, each who are actively involved in the constructive effort against terrorism and their destructive propaganda. This compilation of articles will serve as an easy to access manual for Muslims and people of other faiths to better understand the misrepresented and distorted information and serve the truth by revisiting the concepts and ideologies that the radicalized individuals strongly believe in. An attempt to provide information to deter and demobilize more individuals from being influenced with such atrocity carried out under the name of Islam.

Our tradition is rooted in reading and to seek out teachers that shall expound the meaning while developing a deeper familiarization and coherence from within the Islamic viewpoints, responsive and practical to the needs of the changing times and demonstrated with the true meaning of *Adab*, *Ihsan* and *Hikmah*. The people of the sacred knowledge, comprising of both ‘Ulama and Asatizah serve to impart the truth, we at Pergas strongly hope this book will further contribute towards the preservation of the noble Islamic faith and traditions from these corrupted alterations and false interpretations that may lead others away from seeing the true Islam and facilitate in providing the guidance and reference.

اللَّهُمَّ اهْدِنَا بِهَذَاكَ وَاجْعَلْنَا مِمَّنْ يُسَارِعُ فِي رِضَاكَ
وَلَا تُؤَلِّمْنَا وَلِيًّا سِوَاكَ وَلَا تَجْعَلْنَا مِمَّنْ خَالَفَ أَمْرَكَ وَعَصَاكَ

O Allah! Guide us with Your Guidance and make us of those who hasten to Your Pleasure, do not appoint over us a protector other than You, and do not make us of those who oppose Your Command and disobey You.¹

وصلی اللہ علی سیدنا محمد وآلہ وصحبہ وسلم

Ustaz Mohamad Hasbi Bin Hassan

President

Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Association (Pergas)

¹Excerpt of du'a at the end of gatherings, zikir and lessons by Habib Abdullah Bin Husayn Bin Tahir – author of *Sulam al-Tawfiq* and *Majmu'*.

Foreword

Karen Armstrong

In this important collection of essays, leading scholars draw on the rich traditions of Islam to counter the malignant and dangerous ideology of the Islamic State (IS), which seeks to restore the past glories and political triumphs of Islam by means of violence, cruelty and force. Until the rise of the West in the eighteenth century, Islam had been a major world power – perhaps the major world power – for over a millennium. The Qur'an had given the Muslim *ummah* a mission: their task was to create a just community in which all members, even the poorest, the most unimportant and vulnerable, were treated with absolute respect. A Muslim, therefore, had a political as well as a spiritual mission so the political status of Islam was a matter of supreme importance. This practically expressed compassion would enable Muslims to experience the divine and function effectively in the world. Within sixty years of the death of the Prophet (PBUH), the Muslims – who had hitherto lived outside the great world civilizations in the wilds of Arabia – ruled the largest empire that the world had ever seen - an extraordinary success that seemed to endorse the Islamic vision. This was the way things ought to be.

But after the rise of the European powers, Islam was reduced – almost overnight – to a dependent bloc, and for many Muslims this has been a religious as well as a political crisis. There is a yearning to put Islam back on track. The United States will, I believe, shortly have a similar experience. It too had a rapid and unlooked for political success: no one would have imagined that a few scattered trading colonies on the Atlantic seaboard would so swiftly acquire immense wealth, prestige and political supremacy. But there are clear signs of its imminent decline, which many Americans, who regard the supremacy of the United States as its “manifest destiny”, will experience as a religious as well as a political failure.

It is not difficult to understand the lure of the Islamic State – both for Muslims living within the *ummah* and those who live, often as a despised minority, in Western countries. Watching IS rampaging through Iraq and Syria and capturing large swathes of territory in its early campaigns seemed to recall the first victories of the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet (PBUH). Playing on this, IS fighters have larded their discourse with Islamic quotations; their leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, took the name of the deeply-revered first caliph, and IS imposed a medieval form of shari'ah law in its territories. The obscene savagery of its fighters – with their covered faces, swords, and cut-throat executions – may appear to belong to a bygone primitive age but, alas, from the French Revolution to the Bosnian massacres, mass killing has been a tragic part of the modern experience. IS is no more authentically Islamic than the Ku Klux Klan is genuinely Christian, but many Western people have come to believe that its policies are decisive proof that Islam

is addicted to violence, even though leading Muslim authorities have deplored both its conduct and ideology in the strongest terms. This new book will further explore traditions and writings that will counter this misperception.

I think we see the true Islamic attitude towards war and peace in the life and teachings of the Prophet (PBUH) – especially, perhaps, in the treaty of Hudaibiyyah of 628. For four years, the Muslim *ummah* in Medina had been engaged in a desperate struggle with the Quraysh of Mecca; there had been battles, terrible loss of life and, during the Siege of Medina (627), the community had faced the prospect of extermination:

“When they came against you from above you and from below you, and when your eyes swerved and your hearts reached your throats, while you thought thoughts about God; there it was that the believers were tried, and shaken most mightily.”¹

But a year later, the Prophet made a startling announcement that proved to be a demonstration of his prophetic genius. He announced that, as the result of an inspired dream, he intended to travel to Mecca – right into the heart of enemy territory – to make the *hajj* pilgrimage and he invited his companions to accompany him. This would not be a military expedition; fighting was strictly forbidden in Mecca and its environs at all times, and this prohibition was intensified during the *hajj* (pilgrimage). Pilgrims could bear no weapons, wear no armour, and during their journey to the holy places, a hajji could carry only a small hunting knife to kill game. When they arrived in Mecca, therefore, the Muslim pilgrims were making themselves dangerously vulnerable, marching provocatively unarmed into the heart of enemy territory. It was an extraordinarily perilous enterprise, but about a thousand Muslims volunteered to join the pilgrimage, and the Prophet was accompanied by his wife, Umm Salamah.

This was certainly risky but it was not a suicidal move. The Prophet was aware that he was placing the Quraysh in an extremely difficult position. Every Arab had the right to make the *hajj* and if the Quraysh, the guardians of the Kaabah, forbade a thousand pilgrims who were punctiliously observing the rites to enter the Sanctuary and, worse still, attacked them, they lose all credibility in the region. Nevertheless, the Quraysh did dispatch two hundred cavalymen to attack the unarmed Muslim pilgrims, but a friendly Bedouin tribe led them by a different route safely into the Haram, where they sat down with their camels at the well of Hudaibiyyah. It was a frightening time. The Muslims sent the well-connected `Uthman ibn `Affan to negotiate with the Qurayshi grandees, who took him hostage but sent word to the Muslims that he had been killed. It was a terrible moment, but a stalemate ensued, and, after an extremely anxious wait, the Quraysh eventually sent Suhayl ibn `Amr, a devout pagan whom Muhammad had always respected, to negotiate. The two sat together for a long time, but the terms agreed filled the

Muslims with dismay, since it seemed that they were about to surrender all the gains they had made during this long and terrible struggle.

First, the Prophet promised to return to Medina without visiting the *Haram* (holy sanctuary), but Suhayl agreed that the following year Muslim pilgrims could return and perform the traditional rites in the city. There would be a ten-year truce between Mecca and Medina, and Muhammad promised to return any Qurayshi who converted to Islam and made the *hijrah* (migration) to Medina without the consent of his family, but he also agreed that the Quraysh would not have to return a Muslim who defected to Mecca. The Qur'an had long stipulated that, in the interests of peace, Muslims must accept any conditions proposed by the enemy, however disadvantageous.² To the Muslim pilgrims, these terms seemed far too lenient, but when it came to the actual wording of the treaty they were even more appalled. `Ali was summoned to write to the Prophet's dictation, which began: This is the treaty that Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, has agreed with Suhayl ibn `Amr. Suhayl immediately objected, pointing out, reasonably enough, that if he believed that Muhammad was really the Prophet of Allah, he would not have been fighting him all these years. He insisted that Muhammad must simply use his own name and that of his father in the traditional way. `Ali had already written down the words "the Messenger of Allah" and indignantly refused to excise them. So, the Prophet calmly reached for the pen, asked `Ali to point to the words on the parchment, and deleted them himself. It was the crossing out of ego.

Horried by the treaty and the Prophet's seemingly meek submission, the pilgrims almost rebelled, but, with the skilful help of his wife, the Prophet managed to calm them down and they began the long journey home. But the mood was subdued and disgruntled. `Umar, who had vociferously objected to the treaty, feared that he had irreparably damaged his friendship with the Prophet and when he was summoned to join Muhammad at the head of the party, his heart sank. But to his surprise, he found the Prophet looking radiant as though a great weight had fallen from his shoulders: he had received a revelation, he told `Umar, that was dearer to him than anything under the sun. This revelation was, of course, *Al-Fath*, the *surah* (chapter) of Victory.

"Surely, We have given thee a manifest victory, that God may forgive thee thy former and thy latter sins, and complete His blessing upon thee, and guide thee on the straight path and that God may help thee with mighty help."³

The *surah* revealed the deeper meaning of the events at Hudaibiyyah. God had sent down his *sakinah* (the spirit of peace and tranquillity), which had entered the hearts of the Muslims who had so courageously agreed to accompany the Prophet on this perilous expedition. The treaty of Hudaibiyyah was not a humiliating compromise - far from it; it was a "sign" (an *ayah*), that revealed God's presence.

God had sent down the spirit of peace upon his Messenger and the Muslim *hajjis* (pilgrims), and imposed on them the self-restraint (*hilm*) that was fitting in these circumstances. Muslims were not supposed to be men of war; instead, they must embody the peace and forbearance that allied them with the People of the Book – the Jews and Christians. The *ummah* would not grow and develop by violence and aggressive self-assertion; it would flourish only if it embodied the spirit of mercy, courtesy and tranquillity,

“..as a seed that puts forth its shoot and strengthens it and it grows stout and raises straight upon its stalk, pleasing the owners.”⁴

This was the true ethos of Islam; and, indeed, the historian Ibn Ishaq tells us, Hudaibiyyah was indeed a victory; it proved to be a watershed not a humiliating defeat. Hitherto, the fighting and escalating hatred between Mecca and Medina had made it impossible for people to sit down and discuss the new religion calmly, but the armistice enabled them to meet safely and discuss Islam intelligently and calmly. As a result, “double as many or more than double entered Islam than ever before.”⁵ And two years after Hudaibiyyah, Mecca voluntarily opened its gates to the Muslim army.

In Muhammad’s final sermon to the Muslim community, delivered on Mount Arafat during his Farewell Pilgrimage, he emphasized the unity of humanity in words that speak urgently to our dangerously polarized world. An Arab, he insisted, had no superiority over a non-Arab and a non-Arab was not superior to an Arab; a white person was no better than a black person, nor a black person than a white. Because we were all descended from Adam and Eve, we belonged to a single family. The same applied to religious commitment. The Qur’an insisted that the original message of all the prophets had simply required a total submission to God. Every community had its own, specially revealed *din*, so Muslims must not participate in sectarian squabbles, because God could no more be confined to a single tradition than daylight to a single lamp:

“God is the Light of the heavens and the earth; the likeness of His Light is a niche wherein is a lamp (the lamp in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star) kindled from a Blessed Tree, an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil wellnigh would shine, even if no fire touched it; Light upon Light.”⁶

This, not the brutal chauvinism of the Islamic State, is the vital message that the Qur’an gives to the world. In one verse, God addresses not just the Muslim *ummah*, but the entire human race:

“O humankind, we created you all from a single man and a single woman and formed you into tribes and nations so that you may get to know one another.”⁷

Each one of us, born of a man and a woman, is a conjunction of opposites and, from that conflict within ourselves, we can learn to respect the difference of others. Our task in this world is not to terrorise, convert or slander one another; nor is it to establish dangerously competing national or Islamic states or to slaughter our so-called enemies. Rather, in this time of crisis, we – like the contributors to this book – must all embark on the vital but difficult enterprise of learning to know one another – a task that requires the surrender of egotism; that is *islam*.

Karen Armstrong OBE FRSL is one of the world's leading commentators on religious affairs. She spent seven years as a Roman Catholic nun, but left her teaching order in 1969 to read English at St Anne's College, Oxford. In 1982 she became a full-time writer and broadcaster. She is the bestselling author of over a dozen books, including "A History of God," "The Case for God," "Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life" and, most recently, "The Lost Art of Scripture." She has also amongst other prizes and awards received the TED prize, the Roosevelt Institute Freedom of Worship Award, the Leopold Lucas Memorial Prize, the Nationalencyklopedia's International Knowledge Award, an Order of the British Empire for Services to Literature and Interfaith Dialogue and a Princess of Asturias Award for Social Sciences. She received several honorary doctorates.

¹The Qur'an, 33:10-3; trans., Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran* (Oxford, 1955).

²The Qur'an, 2:193

³The Qur'an, 48:1-2, Arberry translation.

⁴The Qur'an, 48:32, Arberry translation.

⁵Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah*, 751 in A. Guillaume (trans. and ed.) (1995), *The Life of Muhammad, A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, London.

⁶The Qur'an, 24:35, Arberry translation.

⁷The Qur'an, 49:13, trans. M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an* (Oxford, 2004), adapted.

Introduction

Muhammad Haniff Hassan and Rohan Gunaratna

The ideology of the Islamic State (IS) manipulated and mobilised Muslims, especially young impressionable Muslims, to fight for a caliphate and Allah's rule on earth. To join the deadliest threat group, an estimated 60,000 recruits and families travelled from 120 countries to Syria and Iraq, the IS heartland. When governments formed coalitions and responded to the rising threat in Syria and Iraq, the IS expanded. In parallel, the world also witnessed the resurgence of Al-Qaeda, the mothership of the IS. Although they are similar in ideology, they clashed both in the mother theatre of Syria and Iraq, and globally.

Indoctrinated by virulent ideology and incitement by the IS and Al-Qaeda, tens of thousands of other operatives and supporters in Asia, Africa, Middle East and the West joined or formed threat groups, networks, and cells and staged attacks worldwide. The international community mobilised its resources to fight the threat in the core and the periphery. The overwhelming kinetic and lethal response focused on catching, killing and disrupting the operational guerrilla and terrorist threat. However, the threat today survives both in the physical and the virtual space. The operational threat persists in five theatres - Levant with Iraq-Syria as its epicentre, Africa with the Sahel and Somalia as its epicentres, Arabian Peninsula with Yemen as its epicentre, South and Central Asia with Afghanistan as its epicentre, and East Asia with the Philippines and Indonesia as its epicentres. The IS and Al-Qaeda's mastery of the virtual space has enabled it to survive and sustain the fight. The centre of gravity of the threat is ideological, the Achilles heel of the western-centric counter terrorism model.

Singapore developed an updated legal framework, a robust infrastructure and specialist expertise to keep the city-state safe. To continue to build the Singapore nation, Singaporean leaders led by its first Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew understood the need for the government to work with the communities. To counter exclusivism, extremism and terrorism, Singapore developed its own doctrine of promoting moderation, toleration and coexistence. The three community approaches Singapore developed were to counter the threat in the community through community engagement, to deradicalise and rehabilitate those in custody and in the community, and to counter the online threat, a work in progress. As the security of Singapore could no longer be guaranteed by raising its walls, Singapore also shared its expertise and experience with other governments and their partners.

As the terrorists and extremists misrepresented Islam, their precious faith, Singapore's religious clerics rose to the apex challenge to fight the terrorist and extremist ideology and its propagation. This book documents their efforts and

voices in combating extremism among Muslims in Singapore who are not immuned from the menace of violence. The contributors to this book are the local *asatizah*, the graduates of Islamic studies who are certified to teach Islam in Singapore. What is recorded in this book represents only a small part of the Singapore *asatizah*'s commitment and dedication to this work to protect their home and faith.

What is this book about?

This book is about countering IS warped ideology and propaganda based on misinterpretation and misapplication of Islamic intellectual tradition for the purpose of mobilising young impressionable Muslims from all over the world to support its cause by joining the group or executing terrorist attacks on its behalf.

The book seeks to demonstrate how IS ideology and propaganda is theologically misguided by offering the correct and authoritative understanding of Islam.

The book compiles various articles that focus on refuting specific aspects of IS ideology by local Singapore Muslim clerics who have dedicated time in researching IS extremist ideology, rehabilitating local radicalised individuals and engaging in public counter-radicalisation works. Most of these articles were published before in various publication platforms and republished here with permission. Several of the articles are written for the purpose of this edited book project.

Each article was selected for its focus on specific IS ideas accompanied with a theological refutation. As a whole, the articles encompass critical ideas of IS that are used to win support and allegiance, shape attitudes and mindsets towards their misguided vision of a caliphate.

The articles were written and edited with the primary objective of facilitating easy reading for the general public, policymakers and front-liners who are the primary targets of this book, known for their preference for simple and concise presentation over the standard academic approach filled with lengthy conceptual, theoretical and philosophical deliberation of a subject matter with unfamiliar jargons too.

However, the book strives to fulfil the needs and interest of the academic and researchers by providing, where possible, sources and references in footnotes for further reading and deliberation on a subject matter.

Both the focus and straight-to-the-point approach makes this book a valuable reading in the market.

All contributors in this book are local *asatizah* (graduates of Islamic Studies and certified to teach Islam in Singapore). The book, thus, serves to document their efforts and voices in combating extremism among Muslims in Singapore who are not immuned from the menace of violent extremism and radicalisation. Of course, what is recorded in this book represents a small part of Singapore *asatizahs'* commitment and dedication to this work, be it in the form of writing or others.

Why this book?

The premise behind this book is the important role IS extremist ideology played in radicalising individuals and winning over their support. Many have travelled to Syria and Iraq abandoning their families i.e. wife, children and parents, leaving behind a good life and profession to join IS. Some chose to commit atrocities in the countries where they live in the name of IS and many others would render other forms of support such as spreading IS propaganda online, raising funds for IS and recruiting new members.

This book will not dwell into the argument on the important role played by ideas in radicalising Muslim to join and support IS. There are already many studies written on it which readers can refer to.

What needs to be stressed here, so as to avoid misunderstanding, is that recognising the importance and centrality of IS ideology in mobilising support is not the same as arguing it is a single causal factor of radicalisation among Muslims.

The editor of this book recognises, as affirmed also by many studies, that the problem of radicalisation of Muslims towards IS-type violent extremism remains complex, and a result of an amalgamation of various factors. The configuration of these factors and the significance of one above the others might differ from one context to another. However, IS ideology does take important place among the factors, whether at the pre or post radicalisation stage.

In that regard, countering IS ideology becomes one of many important components in mitigating the problem of violent extremism among Muslims today. This book seeks to contribute to this by offering strong and credible arguments that expose how IS ideology is fallacious and warped.

Because IS seeks to legitimise its ideology with Islamic theological arguments and taps on Islamic intellectual traditions, both become important sources for, and make up the main feature of refutation against IS ideology, which explains the nature and character of all articles published in this book.

Using the same theological source and intellectual tradition, the articles compiled in this book would demonstrate how IS has been theologically mistaken and misguided. Thus, Muslims should not be hesitant to reject IS or resist from rendering support to its agents. At the least, and, ideally, they should be confident to debate with those who profess the misguided ideology online or in real life in order to bring the person back to the right path or to prevent others from going onto the wrong path.

It is not the objective of this book, however, to offer comprehensive rebuttal of IS ideology. Nevertheless, the selected articles represent key components of IS ideology. They appear regularly in IS online materials and are used often to influence targeted audiences.

This book would benefit non-Muslims too because IS ideological propaganda has affected them, as much as it affects Muslims.

Some non-Muslims think that what IS propagates is representative of Islam. Others are not sure, but they are anxious about the safety and security of their family and themselves in the multi-cultural and religious society/country that they live in. Right wing extremists, Islamophobes and ultra-nationalists take advantage of IS ideological propaganda to promote hate just like IS is doing. Both are feeding each other's hate ideology to drive a wedge in society and affect the peaceful co-existence necessary for national security and stability.

It is hoped that the book would contribute in preventing misunderstanding and misperception of Islam and Muslims among non-Muslims, and correcting them among those who have been influenced by IS and its extremist counterparts among right-wing, ultra-nationalist and Islamophobe groups. Consequently, we hope to contribute also to harmonious relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in society.

What is the significance of the book?

The book would be handy reading material for the general public, Muslims or non-Muslims, to know the right understanding of Islam vis-à-vis IS ideological propaganda, be it for personal understanding, for parents' guidance of children, for teachers in educating their pupils at school, or for professors when teaching relevant topics to undergraduate and graduate students.

The book would also benefit governmental agencies who deal with counter-extremism works in society and with rehabilitation of incarcerated Muslim extremists or terrorists. It would provide them with necessary "ammunition" against the IS ideological threat in society and in detention facilities.

For those who are into countering IS material online, the book could be a reference to produce various online materials for various audiences. It could also be shared among online users who are looking for counter-IS material.

The book could also inform counter-extremism policies by raising awareness on the importance of countering IS ideological propaganda, how to go about doing it and with whom they could work with to produce similar material.

For whom the book is written?

This book is written for general readers, but it is also suitable for academicians, researchers and policy makers who are interested in the contemporary study of jihadism, jihadist terrorism threat, countering violent extremism and the promotion of harmonious Muslim and non-Muslim co-existence in society.

How is the book organised?

The book is divided into two parts.

The first part provides a historical development of IS and the centrality of ideas in IS' mobilising efforts. This is to provide a brief background to the main aspect of the book – countering IS' misguided understanding of Islam that have influenced many Muslims to commit terrorism and promote strife and disharmony among Muslims, and between Muslims and non-Muslims.

The second part contains a collection of articles countering IS ideology. The articles are selected to address key IS ideas used to influence Muslims to join IS in Syria or Iraq, launch attacks in their own countries against targets deemed to be hostile towards IS or render any form of support to the IS cause.

The key selected ideas are:

- ❖ IS' fight in Syria is the catalyst of the prophesied coming of Al-Mahdi and Armageddon.
- ❖ IS black banner represents the prophesied army of the righteous that would fight with Al-Mahdi
- ❖ Fighting with IS is a legitimate and obligatory jihad for Muslims
- ❖ Establishing the caliphate or an Islamic state is obligatory upon Muslims
- ❖ IS is the legitimate Islamic caliphate today towards which *bay'at* (allegiance) is obligatory upon all Muslims

- ❖ Living in non-Muslim countries under an un-Islamic system and non-Muslim ruler is haram and nullifies a Muslim's testimony of faith
 - ❖ *Hijrah* (migration) to IS territory is obligatory upon any Muslim who has the means to perform it
 - ❖ Permission of parents is not necessary to join jihad with IS and to perform *hijrah* to IS territory
 - ❖ Those who reject and condemn IS are *kuffar* (infidels) and performing *takfiri* against them is obligatory
 - ❖ Hating non-Muslims is a fundamental aspect of Islamic faith
 - ❖ War is the basis of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims
 - ❖ Slavery is permissible and must be revived
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He is also active in social activities as a member of the Islamic Religious Council Appeal Board and Asatizah Recognition Board. He writes extensively in Berita Harian (a local Malay newspaper) and has also published articles in The Straits Times. He has published many books in his name, co-authored a monograph and helped publish two books for PERGAS and the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore. He has a personal blog at www.haniff.sg and a blog to counter Al-Qaeda violent ideology at <http://counterideology2.wordpress.com>.

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Mahfuh completed national school education with GCE A Level before going through an informal, but traditional curriculum, studying under the tutelage of local religious scholars for 15 years before pursuing his first degree.

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Muhammad Saiful Alam Shah holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Islamic Theology from Al-Azhar University, Egypt in 2003. He later obtained his Master in Counselling from Monash University, Australia in 2009. Saiful also read Master of Science in International Relations from RSIS, Nanyang Technological University in 2014. He is a religious counsellor of the Singapore's Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) and has been engaging detained and former terrorists for more than a decade.

His research interest includes Islamism, Salafism, Islamist extremist ideologies, governance and political system in Islam and Islamist terrorist rehabilitation. Saiful had briefed local government agencies namely the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA), the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and the National Security Coordination Secretariat (NSCS). He also had the opportunity to engage the international audience through conferences and workshops such as the Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Conference 2018 at Durham University (UK), Global Center - Expert Workshop on Management, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration of VEO (UK), CT workshop held at International Islamic University (Malaysia), SEARCCT Regional Workshop on Countering DAESH Narratives (Malaysia), International Symposium on Terrorism and Transnational Crime (Turkey), CVE Workshop at John Sloan Dickey Center for International Understanding, Dartmouth College (USA), GCTF Working Group Workshop (USA), GCTF Expert Workshop on Reintegrating Returning FTF (Italy) and UNICRI Yemen Rehabilitation and Reintegration Efforts Steering Committee (Saudi Arabia).

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Mustazah attained his Masters in Quranic Sciences and Prophetic Traditions from the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 2005. He obtained his Bachelor Degree (Honors) in Shariah from Islamic University of Madinah in Saudi Arabia in 2000. Subsequently, he pursued his studies at LEE Community College in Singapore and obtained a diploma in Psychology Counseling. He is an active writer who wrote several books in the field of Fiqh, Hadith and Haj. His book '40 Hadith untuk orang muda' (40 Hadiths for Youth) and '100 Hadith Kompilasi E-AHAD'(Compilation of 100 Hadiths) are still being used as the standard textbook for some mosque madrasah students. In collaboration with PERGAS, he launched another hadith book '40 Hadis Seruan Nabi Kepada Umatnya' (Compilation of 40 Hadiths for Ummah). He co-authored other books i.e '100 Soal Jawab Agama dan Isu-Isu Kontemporari' and 'Operasi Kasino di Singapura dan Implikasinya Terhadap Hukum Pekerjaan dan Muamalah'. He is also a freelance writer for Berita Harian and BeritaMediacorp in Islamic issues. In the field of Hadith, he obtained several ijazah sanad for hadith in Kutub Sittah from Syria. He has been invited to speak about Islamic matters for WARNA, Mediacorp in the Firman & Sabda program. He is an appointed resource person for Syariah Court Singapore. He was appointed as a member and advisor of Shariah Board for AEPim Investments and Securus Partners, which manages Islamic Funds. He is also active in voluntary works. He is a member of the RRG, a Syariah Court Resource Person, a member of Board of Visitors for MINDEF and a member of MUIS Appeal Board.

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