Functionality of Radicalization: A Case Study of Hizb ut-Tahrir

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Author Biography

Dr. Farhaan Wali is a specialist in the study of Islam and Muslims in Britain. He has held several highly esteemed lectureship and research posts in the field of Muslims in Britain. Currently, he is a lecturer in Religious Studies at Bangor University. He has gained a noticeable reputation as a scholar in radical Islam. In addition to his academic expertise, he has been involved in a number of cross-cultural research projects in the private sector related to counter-terrorism and British Muslims. Farhaan Wali has obtained a doctorate in political science from Royal Holloway (University of London).

Abstract

Moving beyond the concern with causes of radicalization, this article explores the transformative aspect of radicalization within Hizb ut-Tahrir (The Liberation Party). The personal narratives obtained from this ethnographic fieldwork are placed into a frame of reference related to how radicalization occurs within Hizb ut-Tahrir. Gaining insight into this social phenomenon required an 'ethnographic' approach, which allowed me to study members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in their natural setting. My access to Hizb ut-Tahrir put me in the unique position of being able to gather the biographical information required to study radicalization. In essence, I sought to acquire, from within the group setting, an understanding of how members become indoctrinated within Hizb ut-Tahrir. As the findings reveal, Hizb ut-Tahrir radicalization is a narrow cognitive process that has distinct behavioural outcomes.

Disclaimer

Farhaan Wali

Introduction

Radical Islam remains a fringe ideology within the United Kingdom, yet its attractiveness continues to grow amongst some younger Muslim practitioners. In Britain, the rise of radical Islam has been spearhead by Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), a vocal radical Islamist group that has been active in the UK for over 30 years. Since the group's arrival in the UK, its ideological agenda has centered on recruiting young people. The demographic makeup of UK membership illustrates this youth bulge, as 85 per cent of members are below the age of 30 and 96.3 per cent were recruited before the age of 25.[1]

The age composition of HT membership is not unexpected, as countless popular movements attract young activists.[2] However, the focus is not to determine why some young British Muslims join HT, but rather to understand the method of radicalization within HT. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly how HT indoctrinates some young Muslims within its organization, because it operates in a clandestine manner. As a result, trying to gain close proximity to HT radicals is an incredibly complicated task. After lengthy negotiations with senior HT officials, I gained access to observe the organizational structure of HT. I witnessed first-hand the transformative consequence of HT radicalization, as young novices gradually adopted the ideology of HT.

History of Hizb ut-Tahrir

Hizb ut-Tahrir came into existence over half a century ago in the West Bank. The founder of HT, Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, witnessed the establishment of a Jewish homeland in the heart of his birthplace. Decades before, he witnessed the West rampage through the Muslim world, solidifying non-Muslim supremacy. He was disgusted with the hegemony of Western culture, which he blamed for weakening the Muslim world.[3] Western culture played a key role in evoking HTs ideological awakening. According to al-Nabhani, the only way to neutralize the dominance of Western culture was to enact HT ideology.[4] Hizb ut-Tahrir ideology is a divine doctrine from which a system emanates.

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[1] Wali, F., *Radicalism Unveiled* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishers, 2013), 116.

[2] Engel, S.M., *The Unfinished Revolution: Social Movement Theory and the Gay and Lesbian Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 39.

[3] Al-Nabhani, Taqi al-Din, *Islamic State* (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 2002a), 4.

[4] Al-Nabhani, Taqi al-Din, *Al-Takattul al-Hizbi (The Party Structure)* (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 2002b), 13.

In its practical formation, HT ideology is fashioned from the Islamic legislative sources, which generate a host of solutions to temporal and metaphysical problems. According to HT, there are three distinct state ideologies: "Democratic secularism, communism, and the Islamic system."[5] The goal of HT is to resume the Islamic way of life and to convey it to the whole of humanity.

We know little about how this clandestine movement operates, in terms of its structure and recruitment, but since its conception in the Middle East, it has progressively sought to expand. It is surprising how little attention this group has received in the academic literature. As a result, HT's activities have gone largely unnoticed, allowing them to establish a popular base of support among some young Muslims in Britain.

Methodology

During my initial encounters with HT members, I noticed that, on the surface, they appeared thoroughly, as evidenced by their dress, language, and leisure activities. However, these young men had become radicalized by HT ideology, turning against liberal and secular values. I wanted to find out what processes contributed to this change. The work of fellow researchers appeared to be characterized by their fascination for radicalization, from a distance.[6] A major reason for this neglect has been the difficulty in collecting primary data as Islamist groups operate in a clandestine manner.[7]

This begs the question, how does one study HT? To begin, what distinguishes this research from other scholarly work is the ethnographic approach. In 2009, I started my fieldwork by attending local HT activities. After spending several months interacting with new recruits and members, I started to observe the *Halaqah* (private study circle). In total, I had access to three separate *Halaqah's*, consisting of 22 novices and four HT members. The fieldwork lasted for 12 months, and within this time, I gained insight into the inner workings of HT radicalization. In particular, the techniques they employ to indoctrinate new activists. Adopting an ethnographic approach gave me an opportunity to study the activities of group members in their natural surroundings.[8]

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[5] Al-Nabhani, Taqi al-Din, *Nidham al-Islam (The System of Islam)* (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 2002c), 24.

[6] For example: Roy, 2002; Crayton, 1983; Crenshaw, 1981; Jenkins, 1979; Post, 1990).

[7] Academics have recently turned to ex-members, as a means to understand the radicalization process. In *Radicalism Unveiled*, I outline the methodological problems with referring to autobiographical accounts of ex-members (such asEd Husain). Refer to Wali, F., *Radicalism Unveiled*.

[8] Garfinkel, H., "Re-specification: Evidence for locally produced, naturally accountable phenomena of order, logic, reason, meaning, method," in G. Button

The approach used to acquire data from my participants relied extensively on a large network of contacts within HT. This enabled me to capture the opinions of the members, allowing me to articulate their views related to the radicalization process. This provided me with insight, as a participant, of the inner workings of the organizational structure. This, furthermore, made my fieldwork easier because I was not considered an outsider, and was given open access to members and to HT culture. However, during the course of my fieldwork, I grew increasingly concerned with the problem of 'selective perception.'[9] In other words, as Ray explains, if one studies a single process extensively, then representativeness of the sample may be compromised.[10] In order to counteract this potential problem, I observed three separate *Halaqah's*, enabling me to experience the same social phenomenon with different novices.

In addition to the ethnographic work, I conducted a series of in-depth interviews with HT novices and members. In order to understand how HT radicalized early recruits required conducting interviews with Farid Kassim and Omar Bakri Muhammad, as they were the founders of the UK branch in the early 1980s.[11] These interviews revealed how the first study cells formed, providing insight into the purpose and strategy of HT radicalization. As the men disclosed, the techniques they developed for indoctrinating young novices formed the wider strategy for HT Britain, which has been in effect for over three decades.

Radicalization

Before commencing this study, I felt somewhat confident that once I gained inner access to HT, at the operational level, I would easily be able to locate instances of radicalization. Instead, as I acquired access, I found it extremely difficult to isolate specific techniques constituting 'radicalization.' So, it became apparent I had to obtain clarity concerning what I meant when I claimed members of HT had been 'indoctrinated'. I felt the best way to do this would be to generate abstract comparisons with other behavioral processes such as 'brainwashing' and 'conditioning'. Wilson makes an interesting distinction between the two based on

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(ed.), *Ethnomethology and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[9] Ray, William, *Methods Toward a Science of Behavior and Experience* (Wadsworth, CENGAGE Learning, 2009), 297.

[10] Ibid.

[11] The interviews with Farid Kassim and Omar Bakri were conducted in 2004 as part of my research into the history of Hizb ut-Tahrir in the UK. Refer to: Wali, F., *Radicalism Unveiled*.

dichotomizing belief and behavior.[12] This would imply radicalization fits together with beliefs, while conditioning relates to behavioral process. In simple terms, 'we condition people to do something; we indoctrinate them to believe something'.[13] This distinction is quite apt for HT radicalization, as novices freely join HT and actively agree to undergo radicalization. Therefore, as will be revealed, radicalization within HT is a group activity lead by the indoctrinator, which takes place in the *Halaqah* (private study circle). It is the indoctrinator's primary function to inculcate his novices with the correct ideological belief system. Therefore, radicalization occurs within the *Halaqah*, while behavioral modification and conditioning occurs outside of the *Halaqah*.

The Difficulty of Explaining the Radicalization Process

Radicalization, as a process, is not easily explained. There are many different ways of framing the subject of radicalization, a good starting point is social psychology. This is because social psychology, as can be inferred from its description, combines the ways in which both social and mental processes determine identity.[14] Radicalization, in a social psychology context, refers to a considerable departure from traditional ideals, constituting a full and real change at the root of the personality.[15] This definition offers a good starting point, but this definition needs to be amended because it is incomplete and far too general in its scope and application. For instance, the same definition of radicalization could be given to those who undergo a religious conversion. According to Rambo, there are two transformations that are central to the conversion process: "total change in all other aspects of life, and a new awareness of the well-being of others."[16] In general, the act of religious conversion might have a similar result to radicalization, but these two forms of identity change are not identical.

Despite accumulating a vast array of new data regarding HT members and their backgrounds, it is still extremely difficult to pinpoint precisely how radicalization occurs, since radicalization is a 'complex process that does not follow a linear path'.[17] The immediate concern here is to provide a

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[12] John Wilson, "Indoctrination and Rationality" in *Concepts of indoctrination: philosophical essays* (New York: Routledge, 1972), 17-18

[13] Snook, I. A., *Concepts of indoctrination: philosophical essays* (New York: Routledge, 1972), 2.

[14] Rom, H. and Lamb, R., *The Dictionary of Personality and Social Psychology* (eds.), (MIT Press, 1986).

[15] Popplestone, J. A. and McPherson, M. W., *Dictionary of Concepts in General Psychology* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988).

[16] Lewis Rambo, "Religious Conversion," in *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 77.

[17] Pargeter, A., "North African Immigrants in Europe and Political Violence," *Studies on Conflict and Terrorism 29:* 737.

definition of radicalization before any serious study of the topic can be made. Firstly, I prefer to use the idiom HT radicalization, instead of more generic terms like radicalization. This is because from social constructivist theory, 'framing' of radicalization draws upon a collective phenomenon that is essentially contextualized to two key agents: the group and the novice.[18] Thus, the definition of HT radicalization crafted in this article can be separated into three distinct parts: (1) a new cognitive perspective is engineered based on HT ideology that is (2) internalized, so (3) the *Hizbi* personality can be created (collective group identity).[19]

Hizb ut-Tahrir Ideology: Engineering Cognitive Change

The most fundamental part of identity transformation in HT is the deep process of radicalization, which provides a new cognitive perspective with which to view the social world. At this point, I want to look briefly at cognitive theory, in order to clarify its meaning in the context of radicalization. Social cognitive theory defines behavior as a reciprocal interaction between an internal emotional state and triggers that are available in the environment.[20] Social psychologists have long tried to identify the key cognitive and motivational changes that occur within individuals when they become group members. The radical group is the primary setting for the creation of a new cognitive perspective, because members are willing to 'bend towards group expectation'.[21] This explanation shows the strong interplay between individuals and groups, enabling HT to change the cognitive perspective of members. Wiktorowicz in her study of Al-Muhajiroun, now disbanded, discovered contact with the radical group often required a 'cognitive opening'.[22] This cognitive opening is a gateway to the wholesale transformation of previously held beliefs. According to Wiktorowicz, this is often inspired by identity crisis, which renders the recipient more susceptible to radical ideology. Thus, early fascination with the radical group often leads to a 'cognitive opening', activating a process of 'religious seeking'.[23] The triggers for this opening are multifaceted and greatly hinge on the experiences of the individual, making them vulnerable to the movement.

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[18] Snow, David A., E. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Wordon, and Robert D. Benford, "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation," *American Sociological Review 51*: 464-81.
[19] Wali, F. *Radicalism Unveiled,* 44.
[20] Bandura, Albert, *Social Learning Theory* (New York: General Learning Press, 1977).
[21] Newcomb, T.M. and Swanson, G.E., *Readings in social psychology* (ed.) (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1953), 221.
[22] Wiktorowicz, Q., *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim extremism in the West*, (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 19.
[23] Ibid.

This view of cognitive change in perception within a group setting involves members privately and publicly adopting this as their own choice.[24] As a result, individuals are categorized, and placed in an in-group. This membership is then internalized by members as an aspect of their identity.[25] In this respect, the basis for a member's self-definition changes within the group, allowing his or her personal identity to be submerged into a collective identity.[26] According to Triplett, moving from a state of social exclusion to a group setting can drastically diminish one's sense of individuality.[27] Similarly, Newcomb found that increased interaction with other members prompts individuals to change their attitudes in accordance with the group consensuses.[28] In other words, for the cognitive transformation to take effect the individual must align his viewpoint with HT ideology.

Internalization and Creating the Hizbi Personality

Internalization is a general term for the process of incorporating concepts and behaviors into one's self, and embedding features of the external world into the internal world.[29] This internal world is strongly influenced by group involvement, actively imposing constraints on behavior and reshaping the external world. In other words, when a novice joins HT, his or her perceptions of others change in accordance with HT's perceptions, allowing him or her to internalize the collective HT ideology. This internalization of ideas and beliefs actively occurs through the culturing process, which completely alters the disposition and creates group loyalty. This transformative phase is integral to HT radicalization, as it infuses the individual to the group.

Hizb ut-Tahrir is a significant actor in the development of a new cognitive and behavioral disposition, especially as it is the sole interpreter of the radical ideology. Within the group setting, the novice is indoctrinated into thinking in accordance with the group perspective. This is manifested in a new way of viewing the social world, which may contradict established

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[24] Appelbaum, R. P., Carr, D., Duneir, M., Giddens, A. "Conformity, Deviance, and Crime," in *Introduction to Sociology* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009).

[25] Tajfel, H., *Human Groups and Social Categories* (Studies in Social Psychology Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[26] Post, Jerrold M. "The Group Dynamics of Terrorist Behaviour," *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy* 36:2 (1986).

[27] Triplett, Norman, "The dynamogenic factors in peace making and competition," *American Journal of Psychology* 9 (1898).

[28] Newcomb, T.M. and Swanson, G.E., *Readings in social psychology* (ed.) (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1953).

[29] Meissner, W. W., *Internalization in Psychoanalysis* (New York: International Universities Press, 1981).

convention.[30]   Thus, the first significant aspect of HT radicalization relates to the establishment of a new cognitive perspective that reflects the group identity. According to Sherif and Sherif, the group setting has a powerful influence on individual behavior, justifying the 'in-group's negative opinions of the out-group'.[31] Similarly, David and Turner argue, in a group setting people tend to 'depersonalize' and 'stereotype' themselves and other people.[32] Consequently, HT members focus more on the similarities between themselves, which makes it easier to impose differences between them and the 'others'. More importantly, the new cognitive perspective, gained in a group environment, spawns greater self-esteem and empowerment.[33] Empowerment is an essential part of the radicalization process, increasing the ideological strength of individuals; the empowered develop a greater sense of confidence in their own abilities. In the context of HT, for example, the member must 'adopt the opinions of the group, its thoughts, and its constitution by word and deed'.[34] This means that anyone who becomes a member of HT has to pledge an oath to adopt everything HT calls for even if he or she is not convinced of some of it.[35] Taken as a whole, the theory of HT radicalization will encompass individual and collective life, identifying the shifting patterns of behavior that take place at the root of a personality.

Before Radicalization: Targeting the Disaffected

Omar Bakri, former leader of HT Britain, argued that young British Muslims struggled to contend with their identity. This perpetuated two completely opposing personalities, which he dubbed, the "Bobby and Abdullah syndrome." At home, the 'Abdullah persona' would revert to an ethnic association, speaking the language of his parents and adhering to their custom. However, outside the home the 'Bobby persona' would materialize. As Bakri declared, "he would drink, go clubbing, and be fully integrated [British culture]."[36] This apparent 'clash of cultures', during the early stages of socialization, would be key to HT radicalization. The engineering of radicals required finding young people that had become

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[30] Hassan, Steven, *Releasing the Bonds: Empowering People to Think for Themselves* (Aitan Publishing Company, 2001)

[31] Sherif, M., and Sherif, C. W., *Social Psychology* (Int. Rev. Ed.) (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

[32] David, B., & Turner, J. C., "Studies in self-categorization and minority conversion: The ingroup minority in intragroup and intergroup contexts," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 38 (1999).

[33] Tajfel, H & Turner, J. C., "An Integrative theory of inter-group conflict," in W. G. Austin and S. Worchel, *The social psychology of inter-group relations* (Monterey, CA: Brooks, 1979).

[34] Al-Nabhani, Taqi al-Din, *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1998), 1.

[35] Ibid, 2.

[36] Omar Bakri Muhammad, recorded interview, March 26, 2004.

disaffected, during their socialization, because these individuals displayed greater motivation towards HT ideology. If socialization were an integral aspect of personality development, shaping and informing identity, then what effect would adverse socialization have? According to Bakri, the issue of racism Passive voice to target those young people that had experienced this in their childhood utilizing the psychological pain; they felt, as a means to radicalize them in adulthood. By exploiting a key developmental stage HT were able to redirect a recruit's negative feelings to a radical treatment.

Those young Muslims that had suffered through their socialization developed dysfunctional identity structures that lead to a proclivity for greater belonging. HT recruits developed through the life cycle struggling to adjust their identity, lacking the ability to control their surroundings, which perpetuated a deep feeling of frustration. The early recruits, in one way or another, all experienced some form of social difficulty that marred their socialization. The research presented in this article suggests the HT elite sought to establish radical cells, comprising almost exclusively of young Muslims. To facilitate this process, the founding members methodically targeted ethnic minorities, arousing a sense of conflict with the dominant culture. This would be achieved by exploiting the dual aspect of socialization received by minority groups. Bakri explained how the experiences of young Muslims being racially attacked, in the cases he observed, caused them to be "distrustful of *Kuffar* (non-Muslims)."[37]

Radicalizing the Novice: The *Halaqah* system

Members of HT believe their organization is distinct, because it is seemingly regulated by detailed protocols that have been codified into a set of adopted rules. These protocols allow HT leadership to allocate tasks at every level, but in actuality, it limits the novices from rationalizing activity. Omar Bakri claimed he built all the cells and placed the new recruits into the *Halaqah*, which is a private study group comprising of one member and five novices.[38] The systematic radicalization of the novice occurred in the *Halaqah*, as it helped solidify core beliefs and established dependency on HT. The *Halaqah* became the static point of radicalization, as it placed the novice within a closed setting that removed them from external anchor, allowing inculcation of HT ideology. Before entering the *Halaqah*, the novice has an established set of ideas related to society and life, forming the ideological point of reference for their existence. However, when placed in the *Halaqah* with other novices, the ideological point of reference fragments as the HT member engineers a

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[37] Ibid.
[38] Omar Bakri Muhammad, recorded interview, March 26, 2004.

new ideological viewpoint. As Wilson asserts, implanting beliefs through authoritative figures can replace reason, making it a form of illegitimate radicalization.[39]

When I began observing the *Halaqah* process, I was concerned that my presence may unintentionally distort its normal function. However, as time passed, I gradually gained acceptance, allowing me to observe the *Halaqah* in its natural environment. By observing the *Halaqah* in its everyday setting, I was able to experience the cognitive and behavioral changes experienced by novices over a 12-month period. Initially, I attributed this change to brainwashing and conditioning. However, this according to Winn would suggest that the novices were 'unaware' of the *Halaqah* purpose.[40] Yet, as observed, novices join the *Halaqah* process willingly. As AQ (novice) declared, "the H [Halaqah] removes ideological contamination and builds the correct ideological foundation."[41] This suggests novices acknowledge the transformative agenda of the *Halaqah*.[42]

As Lifton discovered, brainwashing is not an all-powerful transformative method that can achieve "total control over the human mind."[43] This suggests brainwashing may not be an appropriate description of the *Halaqah* process, because as Farid explained, "we're not creating mindless automatons...we want ideologues."[44] The *Halaqah* is the location where novices are ideologically reformatted, having their thoughts and behavior realigned to HT ideology. Brainwashing may seek a similar outcome, but it employs a range of persuasive techniques as Lifton's study of Chinse communists revealed.[45] In this regard, radicalization as a descriptive measure fits the aims and method of the *Halaqah*, as HT radicalization centers on the novice's ideological framework.

In the early 1980s, Omar Bakri conducted the first UK *Halaqah's*, culturing the first generation of HT recruits. In the *Halaqah*, Omar Bakri went about transforming the novice, in a holistic fashion, rendering them with a *Hizbi* personality. This would entail attaching the thoughts and

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[39] John Wilson, "Indoctrination and Rationality" in *Concepts of indoctrination: philosophical essays* (New York: Routledge, 1972), 14-17.
[40] Winn, D., *The Manipulated Mind: Brainwashing, Conditioning, and Indoctrination* (Malor Books, 2012), 4.
[41] AQ made these comments during a group discussion held on April 7, 2009.
[42] This article does not report the psychological reactions novices had to the Halaqah, as the goal was to understand the mechanics of the radicalization process. In follow up articles, we will provide insight into the psychological impact of the Halaqah process.
[43] Lifton, Robert J., *Thought reform and the psychology of totalism: a study of Brainwashing in China* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 4.
[44] Farid Kassim, recorded interview, June 26, 2004.
[45] Lifton, Robert J. *Thought reform and the psychology of totalism*.

ideas to specific modes of behavior, as to generate a change, which apparently "developed a deep and profound way of thinking."[46] The *Halaqah* process became the central mechanism to sustain the purity of HT ideology by dispersing the ideology throughout the party cells. Omar Bakri recounting how he established the *Halaqah* system in the early 1980s stated the *Halaqah* enabled him to mobilize HT into active cells, which through constant replication gave birth to newer cells across the country.[47]

Omar Bakri assigned great importance to the *Halaqah* process, bestowing serious attention to its precise undertaking. The *Halaqah* had one primary function to indoctrinate the novice in a concentrated manner. The *Halaqah* was used to indoctrinate the novice with a shared belief system, forming a single unit of members, embodying HT ideology. According to Farid Kassim, senior member of HT, the *Halaqah* focused on developing the '*aqlya*' (mentality) and the '*nafsyya*' (disposition) of the novice.[48] The process of constructing the '*nafsyya*' (disposition) among the novices was essential, because HT activity was dependent on the commitment of its new members. Omar Bakri believed the '*nafsyya*' would determine the 'level of sacrifice and commitment' members allocated to the party cause.[49] Omar Bakri was the main *Mushrif* (instructor) of the early recruits, regulating the *Halaqah* and assuming full responsibility for its supervision. The *Halaqah* was configured in a way that made it differ entirely from the academic and philosophical styles of teaching. According to Omar Bakri, the academic style had been rejected as a means of disseminating HT ideology because it detracted the novice from HT's ideological aim and it did not "build Islamic personalities."[50] Importantly, the numbers admitted into the *Halaqah*, by Bakri, was deliberately restricted and organized broadly around the same level. Bakri claimed the academic style "lacks productivity."[51] For instance, he felt culturing novices in large classes prevented the *Mushrif* from tailoring HT ideology to the varying strengths and levels of each novice.

The Structuring of the Halaqah:

The *Halaqah* has received special consideration in HT literature, as it is the main device used to engineer the *Hizbi* personality. According to Omar Bakri, "if the *Halaqah* was organized in an incorrect manner" then

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[46] Omar Bakri Muhammad, recorded interview, March 26, 2004.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Farid Kassim, recorded interview, June 26, 2004.
[49] Omar Bakri Muhammad, recorded interview, March 26, 2004.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

the culturing process would decline.[52] Thus, he formulated a comprehensive set of preventive procedures that would safeguard the *Halaqah* process. First, the preliminary stage of acceptance would be used to maintain the integrity of the *Halaqah*, Bakri explained. In this respect, four standard guidelines would be used to establish in the novice a general awareness of the party culture, which a prospective novice had to obtain as a perquisite for entry into the *Halaqah*. At this stage of entry, HT makes a crucial distinction between acquiring a general awareness and that of conviction; the latter is only procured after a deep process of radicalization through many years of study within the *Halaqah*. In contrast, a general awareness entails a basic acceptance that these auxiliary thoughts are correct and require action.

For this purpose, Bakri developed four entry-level guidelines that had to be fulfilled to gain admittance to the *Halaqah*, which is designed to extend beyond energetic zeal. First, to consolidate, a novice must accept Islam as a complete way of life that addresses all temporal and spiritual problems. Second, the need to abide by the *Hukm Shari* (Islamic law) in all remits of life must be demonstrated, especially related to the establishment of the *Khilafah* (Islamic State). Third, the novice must agree that the work to establish the *Khilafah* is a political action. Finally, admittance cannot take place until the novice acknowledges HT as the only Islamic party correctly working to establish Islam. The novice prior to admittance into the *Halaqah* must agree on these four areas.

The preliminary discussions with the novice would usually take place through individual contact or in small public circles, commonly referred to as an intermediate *Halaqah*. The intermediate *Halaqah*, Farid explained, would consist of "three or four circles addressing each of the guidelines." Omar Bakri made it clear to the new recruits they had consented to 'work' for HT. This was important, as Farid explained, because HT strongly discourages the use of the term 'study'. Rather, 'emphasis was given to work', as HT does not invite people for scholarly study, instead they seek ideological activists who will energetically work to establish the objectives of HT.[53] According to HT, Islam is a religious and political ideology, within which sovereignty belongs exclusively to God. This means human agents do not have the mandate to govern, making man-made ideological systems invalided. This is why HT rejects participation within the political system, and thus requires the recruitment of activists willing to operate outside of the system.

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[52] Omar Bakri Muhammad, recorded interview, March 26, 2004.
[53] Farid Kassim, recorded interview, June 26, 2004.

The new recruits on their admission to HT were explained two further issues by Omar Bakri. First, the work to establish *Khilafah* required clear ideas about Islam. According to HT, Islam is a divine doctrine from which a complete system of human governance emanates. This ideological interpretation seeks the holistic enforcement of the Islamic legislative system in society (e.g. enactment of Sharia Law), as Islam is the only source of worldly guidance. Hizb ut-Tahrir ideology view's Islam as a complete system of human governance, deciphering all human problems (e.g. political, economic, social, and ethical). This makes it mandatory for human beings to implement the ideology of Islam. In order to acquire this ideological understanding of Islam necessitated committing to studying these ideas within the *Halaqah* system.

Second, the novice must attend the *Halaqah* regularly, being punctual and committing themselves to two hours a week: non-compliance is *haram* (sinful act).

The *Halaqah* has been ordained with special administrative consideration, as it implants the ideology within the novice. This means its regulation must be conducted in a strict and consistent manner. For this reason, the *Mushrif* assumes direct responsibility for the supervision of the *Halaqah*. The *Mushrif*, for example, must submit a detailed *Halaqah* report to the *Masool* (area supervisor) after every *Halaqah* informing him of the progression of each novice. Within this report, the *Mushrif* documents tardiness. If a novice is late on a regular basis, then the *Masool* will take action. As Omar Bakri explained, 'lateness cannot be tolerated', because it reduces the importance of HT's work.[54]

The *Halaqah* has distinct stylistic rules. The *Halaqah* should be given in a manner that influences the novice to initiate thinking and feeling. The *Halaqah* facilitates the novice to construct his or her own views rationally and freely. This suggests radicalization is an 'intentional activity'.[55] However, this ignores the *Mushrif*, who is the indoctrinator. The *Mushrif* guides the novice to arrive at the correctness of HT ideology, but this should not occur through blind obedience. The *Mushrif* assumes full responsibility for explaining the content of HT ideology, which is proceeded by a discussion on the concepts raised to gain clarity. Importantly, HT enforced strict guidelines on the *Mushrif*, for instance, he alone could answer questions, without exception, as the credibility of the *Mushrif* would be brought into question if a particular novice answered questions on his behalf. Hizb ut-Tahrir administrative law had gone to

[54] Omar Bakri Muhammad, recorded interview, March 26, 2004.
[55] John Wilson, "Indoctrination and Rationality," in *Concepts of indoctrination: philosophical essays* (New York: Routledge, 1972), 18.

meticulous depths to explain every minute detail related to the *Halaqah*. According to Farid, detailed guidelines had even been documented about the mannerisms of the *Mushrif*, especially when delivering a *Halaqah*: "The *Mushrif* should be quiet and soft spoken, and control his nerves during questions, discussion, and explanation and be cautious not to get angry or agitated."[56] Hizb ut-Tahrir has given the *Halaqah* the highest seriousness, as it indoctrinates novices.

Beginning a New Halaqah

Omar Bakri asserted each *Halaqah* was given significant attention, during the development of the early *Halaqahs*, especially concerning their preparation and administration. In this respect, Omar Bakri requested all *Mushrif's* to act like a "father figure to the novice," guiding and fostering the burden of the novice's development.[57] The *Halaqah* built the *Hizbi* personality. This ideological remolding starts with changing the cognitive perspective, which entails removing the remnants of the old ideological viewpoint. The novice grew up in a secular environment, exposed to an array of non-Islamic standards. The western ideological viewpoint became the basis for action. For this reason, the first phase of *Halaqah* was assigned to studying the book *Nidham al-Islam* (system of Islam). In particular, the first chapter deals with belief, while the second confronts the topic of fate and destiny. These two chapters were used to establish a new ideological framework that would motivate the novice, by altering his entire outlook. The intellectual subject matter of the *Halaqah* helped cultivate a sense of collective radicalization.[58] In contrast to peer discussions, the *Halaqah* drilled ideological content into the novice. As one member explained: "*Halaqah* is a building process…corrupt concepts are destroyed and the correct concepts built."[59] This suggests the goal of the *Halaqah* is to radicalize the individual. I need to stress the HT activists I spoke to all objected to my use of the term radicalization, as they collectively felt it implied a lack of rationality. According to Crenshaw, radicalization can be generated through rational and non-rational methods.[60] In the *Halaqah*, the *Mushrif* rigidly regulates the discussion, making the *Halaqah* a contrived social space.

Secondary Radicalization: Pursuance

In the early 1980s, the first *Halaqahs* were designed to change the sentiments and inclinations of the novice because, as Omar Bakri

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[56] Farid Kassim, recorded interview, June 26, 2004.

[57] Omar Bakri Muhammad, recorded interview, March 26, 2004.

[58] Cited in Wali, F., *Radicalism Unveiled,* 106.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Crenshaw, Martha, "The Psychology of Political Terrorism," in Margaret Hermann (ed) *Handbook of Political Psychology* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985).

explained, "they were brought up in a corrupt western society."[61] However, Omar Bakri realized the *Halaqah* was a short medium, as it is conducted once a week for two hours. To build a conceptual framework in a clear and precise manner required substantial 'pursuance outside of the *Halaqah*. Pursuance entailed following the novice outside of the *Halaqah* in a natural way, to see whether they had assimilated the concepts of the *Halaqah* into their daily life. According to Omar Bakri, the *Mushrif* would visit the novice 'in his home or take him to the Mosque', bringing him closer to the novice.[62] At this early stage, converts to Islam were treated differently, as *Mushrif's* were required to give more time to them, because they had to be taught the fundamentals of religious belief. Through the *Halaqah* Omar Bakri sought to create an environment of 'spirit' that connected the novice to God, via HT. The new members were key to this pure environment; they had to lead by example. Therefore, the *Mushrif* was sanctioned with the duty to consolidate his *Halaqah* into a unified cell. In this respect, the process of radicalization occurred within the peer group setting.

In order to understand pursuance, I was able to observe the interplay between *Mushrif* and novice outside of the *Halaqah*. In essence, novices formed closed peer group bonds, which reinforced HT ideology. As Nina (novice) said, 'practicing was hard early on because you'd be told what to do and how to do it'.[63] This interface seems disproportionate, as the behavioral norms within the peer group are regulated by HT ideology. In addition, pursuance developed close relationships with amongst the novices and the *Mushrif*, making radicalization easier. As Sara explained: "I really trusted the sisters; we became close and I revealed a lot to them about myself."[64] Familiarity within peer groups cultivates ideological socialization.[65] Peer socialization was an important developmental stage in the pursuance process, as it gives the novice a framework to view and interact with the social world. The novices I observed seemed fully engaged within the peer group, creating a strong attachment to HT. As one novice observed, "we'd do *data* (spread HT ideology) and then we'd chill...there is a collective spirt we have." As with all group dynamics, the peer group indoctrinated a deep sense of group identification among the novices. In sum, the novice sought identification with the peer group for the following reasons: (1) membership provided benefit; (2) it offered distinctiveness from other social groups; (3) there was a sense of common experience.[66]

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[61] Omar Bakri Muhammad, recorded interview, March 26, 2004.
[62] Omar Bakri Muhammad, recorded interview, March 26, 2004.
[63] Cited in Wali, F., *Radicalism Unveiled,* 107.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Howe, C., *Peer groups and children's development* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010)
[66] Cited in Wali, F., *Radicalism Unveiled,* 108

When an individual joins HT, they are deliberately engineered towards conformity. This pressure is exhibited, in the first instance, by assuming the role of novice. This initial stage of interaction with HT gradually brings their behavior into alignment with the norms of HT. Most importantly, HT exploits the need to belong within the novice, providing him or her with a feeling of self-importance by conveying a new cognitive worldview. As the radicalization process deepens, the novice is gradually conditioned to accept the moral supremacy of HT ideology. This is clear from the comments made by Farid, concerning the need for the individual to embody HT ideology in all aspects of his or her life, as he states:

> "The power of the ideology attracted us to the party, and
> I felt that power when I used to visit other people's
> circles and meetings. You just felt this incredible
> confidence, not arrogance, but confidence. The truth is
> arrogant, so you feel this power and that's never gone
> away from me, twenty years plus now."[67]

This view indicates how the individual grows to depend on HT, inspiring loyalty and long-term commitment. Shaw makes a similar assessment of membership in a terrorist organization, as the group "often provides a solution to the pressing personal needs" that is not achieved in the wider society.[68] This offers the individual a new identity and a role in society, albeit a negative one, which in a passive sense imposes conformity. This is equally true for members of HT, as they cannot envisage life outside of HT.

Conclusion

The 1980s marked a pivotal period in the development of HT, as they deliberately targeted the Muslim youth. It was on these grounds we decided to approach the question of how HT radicalization functions. I have discovered HT radicalization to be a narrow and distinct psychosocial phenomenon with identifiable patterns related to controlling an individual's behavior. Radicalization is not simply an individualistic process; rather, it is embedded in a group context that exerts influence over the individual.

Hizb ut-Tahrir indoctrinates the novice with a distinct ideological worldview, shaping how the novice perceives and interacts with the social world. The inculcation of HT ideology occurs in the closed group setting of

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[67] Farid Kassim, recorded interview, June 26, 2004.
[68] Shaw, Eric D, "Political Terrorists: Dangers of Diagnosis and an Alternative to the Psychopathology Model," *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 8 (1986): 359-68).

the *Halaqah*. Hizb ut-Tahrir describes this activity as an intellectual exercise, but as a political movement, they seek social change and this requires ideologically trained activists. The *Halaqah* is the central instrument employed to inculcate HT ideology. As Passmore declares, radicalization is a "special form of drilling in," which in the case of HT entails 'drilling' HT ideology within the novice.[69]

The function of the *Halaqah* is to inculcate the novice with HT ideology. Initially, this entails engineering a new cognitive outlook. The *Halaqah* as a change agent is a life-long technique employed by HT to reinforce HT ideology for the entire lifespan of the novice. However, the *Halaqah* does not end with membership, as all activists perpetually receive weekly *Halaqah*. This prolonged radicalization method allows the novice to navigate the paradoxes of the outside world. As the novice re-enters society, they encounter ideas that challenge their newly adopted ideology. Attending the weekly *Halaqah* allows the novice to align their social experiences with HT ideology, providing the novice with a constant point of reference.

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[69] Passmore in *Concepts of indoctrination: philosophical essays* (New York: Routledge, 1972), 128.