

POPE FRANCIS, ISLAM AND THE “ISLAMIC” STATE: FORGING A PATH TO PEACE THROUGH A COMPLEX JURIDICAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

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Resumen

Una dificultad para captar.. el terrorismo geopolítico llevado a cabo por el auto llamado “Estado” que proclama ser “islámico” es la visión política, jurídica y religiosa entramada que hay detrás, y las implicancias que se siguen de ello. Este artículo intentará identificar algunos de los desafíos jurídico-religiosos que posee este fenómeno, y la responsabilidad diplomática del Papa Francisco en la misma

Palabras clave: Papa Francisco, Islam, Estado Islámico, Santa Sede y Diplomacia

Abstract: One difficulty in grasping geopolitical terrorism carried out by the self proclaimed “State” claiming to be “Islamic” is the interwoven political, juridical and religious vision behind it and all the implications flowing from this. This article will attempt to identify some of the Juridical/Religious challenges posed by this phenomena and the diplomatic response of Pope Francis thereto.

Keywords: Pope Francis, Islam, Islamic State, Holy See, and Diplomacy

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Introduction

Confessional states end badly. That goes against the grain of History. I believe that a version of laicity accompanied by a solid law guaranteeing religious freedom offers a framework for going forward. We are all equal as sons (and daughters) of God and with our personal dignity.²

Pope Francis

One difficulty in grasping geopolitical terrorism carried out by the self proclaimed "State" claiming to be "Islamic" is the interwoven political, juridical and religious vision behind it and all the implications flowing from this. This article will attempt to identify some of the Juridical/Religious challenges posed by this phenomena and the diplomatic response of Pope Francis thereto. In so doing, the article will be divided into the following sections. Section I will offer a brief introduction to Islam generally and the diversity within it. Section II will consider The "Islamic" State and aspects of the ideologies sustaining it. Section III will then seek to examine trends in the diplomatic response of Pope Francis to these issues. Finally, a brief conclusion will be offered.

1. The Unified Worldview of Islam and the Rules Governing It

1.1. A Blueprint for Society

It is important to acknowledge that the extensive chronological, cultural, and geographic development of Islam³ has contributed to a great variety in the understanding and articulation of Sharia law today. Generally speaking, Sharia law is the comprehensive set of rules and regulations that govern Muslims in their daily lives. As Islam is understood to be an all-encompassing blueprint for society and thus more expansive than a religion in the western sense, Sharia law is thus more expansive than a religious or canonical law in

² Guillaume Goubert and Sébastien Maillard, "Interview [with] Pope Francis," *La Croix*, May 17, 2016, accessed September 4, 2016, <http://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Pape/INTERVIEW-Pope-Francis-2016-05-17-1200760633>

³ Islam literally means submission, resignation, or reconciliation to the will of God. Coming from the root "Salam", a notion of "peace" is understood as the fruit of this submission See "سلم" and "اسلام" in the Hans Weir Arabic English Dictionary, 4th edition.

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the western understanding.⁴ This comprehensive nature of Sharia law is important to highlight, as it covers all aspects of a Muslim's life including the religious, social, and political.⁵ Sharia law for Muslims is the law of God, which serves as the "way."⁶ Muslims believe that this "way" comes directly from God via the sacred book of the *Qur'an*, with the *Sunna* (traditions given by the words and actions of the Prophet), *Legal Reasoning*, *Legal Analogy*, and *Consensus* all playing an important role as well.⁷

1.2 Primary Sources

1.2.1 Qur'an

The name Qur'an comes from the Arabic stem Qara'a, "to read," "to recite," and means the "Reading," the "Recitation," i.e., the "Book."⁸ It is the primary and first source of Islamic law. Muslims consider the Qur'an to be the *literal and exact* word of God given to Muhammad by God through the Angel Gabriel.⁹ Muslims believe that these words were memorized by Muhammad (570 - 632), passed onto his companions, and then compiled in written form following his death.¹⁰

1.2.2 Sunna and Hadith

This secondary source of Islamic law, the *Sunna*, denotes a tradition or practice generally accepted as traceable back to Muhammad's behavior during his lifetime.¹¹ The term *Hadith* denotes an oral account of these Sunna, conveying what Muhammad "said, did, or tacitly approved with regard to a particular matter."¹² There are manifold collections

⁴ See Jonathan Berkey, *The Formation of Islam* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003); Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam* (London, Belknap Press, 2010).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Giorgio Paolucci, Camille Eid, and Samir Khalil Samir, *Cento Domande Sull'Islam: Intervista a Samir Khalil Samir* (Genova: Marietti, 2002), 216-217.

⁷ See generally Sami A. Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, *Il Diritto Islamico: Fondamenti, Fonti, Istituzioni* (Roma: Carocci, 2008); Wael B. Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Wael B. Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁸ Abu-Sahlieh, *Il Diritto Islamico*, 93-100.

⁹ See for example, "Understanding Islam", Embassy of Saudi Arabia, accessed March 16, 2016, http://www.saudiembassy.net/about/country-information/Islam/understanding_Islam.aspx.

¹⁰ John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 256.

¹¹ Abu-Sahlieh, *Il Diritto Islamico*, 167-168.

¹² Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 173.

of Hadith with varying levels of acceptance amongst Muslims.¹³ Every Hadith is composed of both the chain of transmitters and the narrative itself.¹⁴ Issues related to authenticity, veracity, and reliability have given rise to controversy through the centuries regarding the content and collection of Hadith.¹⁵

1.2.3 Ijtihad, Qiyas, and Ijma

The general idea in Sharia law is that new norms are not to be created – as God is the only legislator – but deduced through recourse to the Qur’an and Sunna.¹⁶ *Ijtihad* refers to the personal discernment involved in applying the Qur’an and Sunna to a concrete situation.¹⁷ *Qiyas*, or the deduction and articulation of a juridical solution through *legal analogy*, is a tool utilized in this respect.¹⁸ *Ijma*, or Consensus, is the agreement on a particular issue by the Muslim community.¹⁹ The debate on the proper understanding and utilization of these terms is longstanding and complex. Questions range, for example, from the role and limits of individual reasoning in the interpretation of the Sharia with regard to *Qiyas* and *Ijithad* to the scope and nature of consensus in *Ijma*.²⁰

1.3 Distinctions Affecting Sharia Law

1.3.1 Sunni vs. Shia Islam

The fundamental division of Sunni and Shia Muslims is foundational and impacts the modes of interpretation and understanding Sharia law. Sunni Muslims are estimated to be 85% of the world’s 1.5 billion Muslims, comprising 90% or more of the populations of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.²¹ Shia Muslims for their part are estimated to be around

¹³ Abu-Sahlieh, *Il Diritto Islamico*, 167-197

¹⁴ Ibid, 171-172.

¹⁵ Ibid, 167-197.

¹⁶ Ibid, 219.

¹⁷ Ibid, 219-234.

¹⁸ Ibid, 263-272.

¹⁹ Ibid, 255-262.

²⁰ For some important aspects of the discussion, see for example, Wael B. Hallaq, “Was the Gate of Ijtihād Closed,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16 (1984): 3–41; Wael B. Hallaq, *Sharī‘a: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Robert R. Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamist Crisis* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2010).

²¹ See “Sunnis and Shia: Islam’s ancient schism,” *BBC News*, January 4, 2016, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16047709>; Paolucci, *Cento Domande*, 216-217.

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10% of the overall global Muslim population, notably present in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon.²² This division has its roots in a dispute over who would lead the Muslims after the death of Muhammad.²³ “Sunnis,” basing themselves in “tradition” as the Arabic word signifies, desired that the tradition of consultation by tribal leaders decide who would lead the Muslim community.²⁴ Those who became known as the Shia argued that leadership should follow familial lines of Muhammad himself through the “party of Ali.”²⁵

1.3.2 Diversity of Juridical Schools of Thought

Within both Sunni and Shia Islam, juridical schools of thought developed throughout the centuries with each varying in certain respects from one another.²⁶ It is beyond the scope of the present discussion to consider the schools in depth. It is important to note, however, that in the span of its vast territorial and cultural conquests a certain plurality of legal thought became an inevitable aspect of Islamic evolution.²⁷ This plurality has coalesced into schools of thought over time with geographic, cultural, and sociological factors all influencing them.²⁸ Traditionally, the predominant schools for the Sunni are the Hanbali, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanafi; and for the Shiites it is the Ja'fari.²⁹

Notably, the Hanbali school is known for its conservative approach and is found in Saudi Arabia.³⁰ The Hanafi school is found in Central Asia, Egypt, Pakistan, India, China, Turkey, the Balkans, and the Caucasus.³¹ The Maliki school is dominant in North Africa and the Shafi'i school in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Yemen.³² For Shia Muslims, the Ja'fari school is prominent in Iran and Lebanon.³³

1.3.3 Reform Movements

²² Ibid.

²³ John L. Esposito, *The Future of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 52.

²⁴ Abu-Sahlieh, *Il Diritto Islamico*, 50-51.

²⁵ Esposito, *The Future of Islam*, 52.

²⁶ Abu-Sahlieh, *Il Diritto Islamico*, 49-82.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid, 57-59.

³¹ Ibid, 51-54.

³² Ibid, 54-57.

³³ Ibid, 59-62.

Reform movements can impact the understanding and articulation of Sharia law as well, intensifying religious practice and thus the implementation of Sharia law. Two examples often mentioned in the media are "Salafism" and "Wahhabism." The general idea behind these movements is to practice a more pure or authentic form of Islam that is cleansed of anything contrary to its original spirit and practice. For example, Salafism in its most general sense is a neo-orthodox reform movement striving to live according to the practices of the "pious forefathers" of early Islam.³⁴ Wahhabism concerns a particular current of Salafism that is well known for the adherence and global promulgation of Saudi Arabia.³⁵

1.3.4 Integration in Overall Legal Frameworks

There is a broad spectrum regarding the degree of Sharia law integration into overall national legal systems. Historically, Sharia law was applied through the comprehensive governance of the *caliphate*, or the formal Islamic ruling institution in succession of the prophet Muhammad.³⁶ With the caliphate dissipating, however, along with the fall of the Ottoman Empire following World War II, Saudi Arabia is perhaps the most well known modern example of a nation state applying their vision of Sharia law in a relatively comprehensive and literal manner.³⁷ Other examples where Sharia law is a primary source of the legal system are Kuwait, Bahrain, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates.³⁸ Most Muslim majority countries, however, include aspects of Sharia law to varying degrees within their larger system, particularly with regard to issues of family and financial law. Some examples of this type of system are Jordan and Lebanon among others.³⁹

Much attention has been given to the existence and activity of terrorist groups, professing to act in the name of Islam, seeking to violently impose a literal interpretation of Sharia law in areas under their control. With the goal of establishing their vision of the Caliphate and Islamic society at whatever the cost, Sharia law is often used as both the justification and goal of their actions. A common theme is often that of seeking to expand

³⁴ Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 274-275.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 123.

³⁶ Cole Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*, (Analysis Paper, The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, March, 2015), accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/03/ideology-of-islamic-state>, 40.

³⁷ "The World Factbook," Central Intelligence Agency, accessed March 16, 2016, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2100.html>.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁹ *Ibid*.

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their version of Islam through physical combat for the sake of their religious views, or violent *jihad*.⁴⁰

2. The “Islamic” State and Ideologies Sustaining It

2.1 Overview of Key Ideological Influences

The Islamic State is emblematic in this respect.⁴¹ By taking over parts of Syria and Iraq, it has reportedly 10 million people under its control.⁴² It is estimated that 27,000 foreign fighters from 86 countries have come to join the Islamic State, with more than half of them from the Middle East and North Africa.⁴³ Though the territory controlled by the Islamic State is diminishing, the challenges presented by the group are extremely complex and have long-term religious, juridical and political implications.⁴⁴

The Islamic State professes Sunni Islam, with an extreme Salafist-jihadist⁴⁵ orientation routinely attributed to it.⁴⁶ The ideological progression that has led to what is now seen

⁴⁰ See, for example, George Weigel, *Faith, Reason, and the War against Jihadism: A Call to Action* (New York: Doubleday), 2007.

⁴¹ In the case of the Islamic State, it is generally accepted that a true nation-state according to International law has not been established. The traditional criteria of statehood according to the Montevideo Convention includes a permanent population, a defined territory, a government and a capacity to enter into relations with other states. All of these elements can be called into question in this case. For a brief overview of the discussion, see Joe Boyle, “Islamic State and the Idea of Statehood,” *BBC News*, January 6, 2015, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30150681>.

⁴² “Islamic State group: Crisis in seven charts,” *BBC News*, August 23, 2016, accessed September 4, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034>.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Reform movements can impact the understanding and articulation of Sharia law as well, intensifying religious practice and thus the implementation of Sharia law. As will be discussed later, two examples often mentioned in the media are “Salafism” and “Wahhabism.” The general idea behind these movements is to practice a more pure or authentic form of Islam that is cleansed of anything contrary to its original spirit and practice. For example, Salafism in its most general sense is a neo-orthodox reform movement striving to live according to the practices of the “pious forefathers” of early Islam. Wahhabism concerns a particular current of Salafism that is well known for the adherence and global promulgation of Saudi Arabia.

⁴⁶ See generally, for example, Cole Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*; Elliot Friedland, *Islamic State*, (Special Report, The Clarion Project, May 10, 2015), accessed March 16, 2016, <https://www.clarionproject.org/sites/default/files/islamic-state-isis-isil-factsheet-1.pdf>; William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: St. Martin’s Press), 2015; Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan. *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (New York: Reagan Arts), 2015; Jessica Stern and J. M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, (New York: HarperCollins,

in the Islamic State is nuanced, but some important key figures and markers along the way include the following. Emerging from the Sunni tradition of Islam was *Ahmad Ibn Hanbal* (780-855), from which the Hanbali legal school, prominent in Saudi Arabia, takes its name.⁴⁷ Ibn Hanbal advocated for a literalist reading of the Qur'an and notably for the role of Islamic scholars to assist the ruling class in their religious adherence.⁴⁸ *Ibn Taymiyya* (1263-1328) continued in this tradition by emphasizing textual literalism, a desire to return to the example of the righteous early Muslim community and a stark delineation between believer and unbeliever.⁴⁹ These two figures and their ideological legacies would ultimately go on to influence later Salafist reformers and ultimately the creation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia itself.

Serving as a catalyst in this regard was *Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab* (1703–1792).⁵⁰ Al-Wahhab similarly emphasized textual literalism and sought the Islamic experience of the righteous early Muslims.⁵¹ His 1744 alliance with *Muhammad Ibn al-Saud* formed the basis for the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.⁵² The agreement effectively provided for the socio-religious reform as envisioned by al-Wahhab to serve as the foundation for the geopolitical conquests of Al-Saud.⁵³ These conquests in turn served to promulgate the strict vision of Islamic reform of al-Wahhab.⁵⁴ Egyptian activist and reformer *Sayyid Qutb* (1906–1966) is understood by many to then have "translated" these ideas of strict reform to a modern generation in arguing for the corruption of Western secularism and the lapse of Islamic practice in modern Muslim societies.⁵⁵ Qutb proposed for jihad, both in a defensive and offensive sense, to achieve the return to a pure Islam necessary for the flourishing of society.⁵⁶

2016); Jim Muir, "The Islamic State Group: The Full Story," *BBC News*, March 11, 2016, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35695648>.

⁴⁷ Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate*, 8; Muir, "The Islamic State Group: The Full Story."

⁴⁸ Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 126-127.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁵⁰ Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 123; Friedland, *Islamic State*, 14.

⁵¹ Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 123; Friedland, *Islamic State*, 14; Muir, "The Islamic State Group: The Full Story."

⁵² Muir, "The Islamic State Group: The Full Story"; "History of the Kingdom," *Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, March 12, 2013, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.mofa.gov.sa/sites/mofaen/ServicesAndInformation/aboutKingDom/Pages/CountryDevelopment36143.aspx>.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Friedland, *Islamic State*, 14; Muir, "The Islamic State Group: The Full Story".

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

2.2 Aspects of Historical Development

These ideological influences swirled into vacuums created by conflict and post-war destabilization. They found particular re-articulation in late 20th century jihadist terror organizations such as the *Taliban* and *Al-Qaeda*. The Afghan Taliban (literally, “students”) arose following the anti-Soviet jihad and sought to create an Islamic State free from un-Islamic influence.⁵⁷ Led by *Osama bin Laden*, Al-Qaeda al-Jihad (literally, “the base of holy war”) emerged as a network facilitating the jihad of Arab volunteers in the Soviet-Afghan conflict.⁵⁸ Upon the successful campaign against the Soviets, Al-Qaeda broadened their jihadist efforts against un-Islamic influences at large, with American presence and interests being a primary focus.⁵⁹

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq by American coalitions, the socio-political situation of the region continued to destabilize. The Taliban was removed from power in Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda was hunted relentlessly, and the Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein was overthrown in Iraq.⁶⁰ The *Arab Spring* uprisings against longstanding governmental regimes further destabilized the region, with the Syrian population enduring vicious civil conflict.⁶¹

All of these factors, among others, set the stage for the onset of the Islamic State. A branch of Al-Qaeda formed in Iraq in 2004 with the related goals of expelling the American presence there and eventually founding an Islamic state enforcing Sharia law.⁶² The *Islamic State of Iraq* was proclaimed in 2006, which in turn exploited tensions in Syria to expand its influence there under the name of the *Islamic State of Iraq and Sham “ISIS”* (Greater Syria) in 2013.⁶³ With a brutality and manner of operation seemingly too much even for Al-Qaeda, formal affiliation between the two entities was disavowed by Al-Qaeda in early 2014.⁶⁴ After sweeping conquests in Iraq, a *caliphate* was declared in mid

⁵⁷ “Who are the Taliban,” *BBC News*, September 29, 2015, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11451718>.

⁵⁸ Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate*, 13-35; Jayshree Bajoria, and Greg Bruno, “Al-Qaeda,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, June 6, 2012, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/al-qaeda-k-al-qaida-al-qaida/p9126>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate*, 13-16.

⁶¹ Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, 39-44.

⁶² Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate*, 13-35.

⁶³ See Chapter 1 and 2 of Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

2014.⁶⁵

2.3 Interpretations Fueling Islamic State Violence

2.3.1 Slavery, Rape, and Trafficking

Issue 9 (May 2015) of the Islamic State's *Dabiq* propaganda magazine featured an article celebrating the slavery of Christian women and children.⁶⁶ The article, "Slave girls or Prostitutes," praises the Islamic State practice of slavery, sexual and otherwise, as compared to the corruption of prostitution found in the West. The following verses from the Qur'an are given as justification for their views:

And if you fear that you will not deal justly with the orphan girls, then marry those that please you of other women, two or three or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then marry only one or those your right hand possesses.⁶⁷ An-Nisā': 3

And marry onto the unmarried among you and the righteous among your male slaves and female slaves. An-Nūr: 32

And they who guard their private parts, except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will not be blamed. Al-Mu'minūn: 5-6

And a believing slave-girl is better than a polytheist, even though she might please you. Al-Baqarah: 221

The outspoken proclamation of these practices as virtuous is haunting. For example, quotes such as the following fill the Islamic State's *Dabiq* propaganda magazine:

As for the slave-girl that was taken by the swords of men following the cheerful warrior (Muhammad – sallallāhu 'alayhiwa sallam), then her enslavement is in opposition to human rights and copulation with her is rape?! What is wrong with

⁶⁵ Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate*, 40.

⁶⁶ Umm Sumayyah Al-Muhajirah, "Slave Girls or Prostitutes," *Dabiq*, May 2015.

⁶⁷ Ibid. "The right hand's possession" (mulk al-yamīn) refers to female captives of war who were separated from their husbands by enslavement.

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you? How do you make such a judgment? What is your religion? What is your law?⁶⁸

Their explanation, as illustrated in their official guidelines on the practice, is as follows.⁶⁹ For the Islamic State, it is the “unbelief” of the woman that makes it permissible take a woman captive.⁷⁰ According to the guidelines of the Islamic State, there is no dispute among scholars that it is permissible to capture unbelieving women such as Christians.⁷¹ It is permissible to have sexual intercourse with the female captive, even if she has not reached puberty and is deemed “fit for intercourse.”⁷² If she is not deemed “fit for intercourse” then one can “enjoy her without intercourse.”⁷³ Female captives and slaves can be purchased, sold, and gifted as they are considered property.⁷⁴

2.3.2 Conversion, Taxation or Death for Christians

This tax, known as the *jizya*, is the tax Christians historically paid according to Sharia law to live in territories under Islamic rule. Through paying the *jizya* the life of the Christian is spared and the Christian is allowed to remain in the Islamic territory, though the Christian is relegated to the extremely restricted sociopolitical and theological category of *dhimma* (“protected” person).⁷⁵ Christians traditionally are presented with three options: convert to Islam, pay the tax, or death.⁷⁶ The justification given by the Islamic State from the Qur’an is the following:

⁶⁸ Al-Muhajirah, “Slave Girls or Prostitutes,” 49.

⁶⁹ “Sex Slavery In The Islamic State – Practices, Social Media Discourse, And Justifications,” The Middle East Media Research Institute, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.memrijttm.org/sex-slavery-in-the-islamic-state-practices-social-media-discourse-and-justifications-jabhat-al-nusra-isis-is-taking-our-women-as-sex-slaves-too.html>.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ The term *dhimma* refers to the status of being “protected” as a Christian or Jew upon the signing of the contract and payment of the tax. See Paolucci, *Cento Domande*, 212.

⁷⁶ “ISIS Message To France And World's 'Infidels': Convert To Islam Or Pay Jizya Poll Tax,” The Middle East Media Research Institute, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.memrijttm.org/isis-message-to-france-and-worlds-infidels-convert-to-islam-or-pay-jizya-poll-tax.html>; Kelly Phillips Erb, “Islamic State Warns Christians: Convert, Pay Tax, Leave Or Die,” *Forbes*, July 19, 2014, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kellyphillipserb/2014/07/19/islamic-state-warns-christians-convert-pay-tax-leave-or-die/#266c59c63718>.

Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day, and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful, and who do not adopt the religion of Truth from those who were given the Scripture. [Fight them] until they give the jizya willingly in submission. At-Tawbaw: 29

The Islamic State explained their interpretation in a video from October 2015 entitled "Fight Those Who Do Not Believe in Allah Until They Give the Jizya Willingly While They Are Humbled." The Islamic State proclaimed that "this is a message to all the Christians in the East and West, and to America, the defender of the cross: Convert to Islam, and no harm will befall you. But if you refuse, you will have to pay the jizya tax."⁷⁷

A *dhimma* contract of the Islamic State, in following traditional formulations of the agreement, contained the following stipulations.⁷⁸ Christians may not build churches or the like in the city or in the surrounding areas.⁷⁹ They may not display religious symbols nor recite their books such that Muslims may hear.⁸⁰ They may not own guns nor carry out any act of aggression against the Islamic State.⁸¹ They must respect Muslims and not criticize their religion.⁸² They must abide by the Islamic State's rules of dress and commerce. Christians considered wealthy must pay four gold dinars annually (approximately 715 USD), middle-class Christians two gold dinars (approximately 375 USD), and one for those considered poor (approximately 178 USD).⁸³

2.3.3 Murder of "Unbelievers"

⁷⁷ "ISIS In New Video To Christians In Qaryatayn, Syria: Pay Jizya – Or You Will Be Executed And Your Wives Enslaved," The Middle East Media Research Institute, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.memrijttm.org/isis-in-new-video-to-christians-in-qaryatayn-syria-pay-jizya-or-you-will-be-executed-and-your-wives-enslaved-.html>.

⁷⁸ The origins can be traced back to the reportedly 7th century Pact of Umar, during the caliphate of Umar Ibn Khattab. See Norman Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 157-158.

⁷⁹ "ISIS Issues Dhimma Contract For Christians To Sign, Orders Them To Pay Jizyah," The Middle East Media Research Institute, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.memrijttm.org/isis-issues-dhimma-contract-for-christians-to-sign-orders-them-to-pay-jizyah.html>.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ "The Islamic State's Treatment Of Christians," The Middle East Media Research Institute, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.memrijttm.org/the-islamic-states-iss-treatment-of-christians.html>.

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From Issue 10 of *Dabiq*, entitled “The Laws of Allah or the Laws of Men,”⁸⁴ the Islamic State cites the following verses from the Qur’an:

And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists (mushrikīn) wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. At-Tawbah: 5

And fight them until there is no fitnah and until the religion, all of it, is for Allah. Al-Anfāl: 39-40

So when you meet those who disbelieve strike their necks. Muhammad: 4

Fight them; Allah will punish them by your hands and will disgrace them and give you victory over them. At-Tawbah: 14

From Issue 10 of *Dabiq*, the following passage below introduces the citation of the previous verses from the Qur’an:

We will rub the noses of the *kufār*⁸⁵ in dirt, shed their blood, and take their wealth as *ghanīmah*⁸⁶ by the might and power of Allah. And we do all that in emulation of the Prophet, not innovating anything. We do it in obedience to Allah and His Messenger, and to come closer to Allah. And we hope to attain abundant rewards by this deed, as per His statement...⁸⁷

From Issue 7, in the article “Islam is the Religion of the Sword Not Pacifism,” the Islamic State further explains their perspective:

“Islam is the religion of peace,” and they mean pacifism by the word peace. They have repeated this slogan so much to the extent that some of them alleged that

⁸⁴ “The Law of Allah or the Laws of Men,” *Dabiq*, July 2015, 61-62.

⁸⁵ This derogatory term denotes “irreligious, unbeliever, infidel, atheist, ungrateful” and is associated with non-Muslims. See “كافر” and “كفر” in the *Hans Weir Arabic English Dictionary*, 4th edition and Paolucci, *Cento Domande*, 214.

⁸⁶ This means the treasure or goods taken from war. See *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. C.E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, and G. Lecomte (Leiden: Brill, 1997), s.v. “Ghanima.”

⁸⁷ “The Law of Allah or the Laws of Men,” *Dabiq*, July 2015, 61-62.

Islam calls to permanent peace with *kufir* and the *kāfirīn*. How far is their claim from the truth, for Allah has revealed Islam to be the religion of the sword, and the evidence for this is so profuse that only a *zindīq* (heretic) would argue otherwise...⁸⁸

2.4 Violent Ideologies and Their Diffusion

Discussion regarding the actions of the Islamic State has navigated toward condemning their inhumane conduct as not properly representative of Muslims universally nor Islam as such. Political and Religious leaders from around the world, Muslim and Non-Muslim alike, have issued sweeping condemnations of the actions of the Islamic State.⁸⁹ The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which is composed of 57 nations and describes itself as "the collective voice of the Muslim world," officially stated that the actions of the Islamic State "have nothing to do with Islam and its principles that call for justice, kindness, fairness, freedom of faith and coexistence."⁹⁰

The most well known university in Sunni Islam, *Al-Azhar*, for its part called the Islamic State a "Satanic, terrorist" group.⁹¹ However, in condemning the Islamic State, Al-Azhar has refrained from denouncing its militants as heretics, a nuanced proclamation⁹² that

⁸⁸ "Islam is the Religion of the Sword Not Pacifism," *Dabiq*, February 2015, 20.

⁸⁹ For example, see Asma Alsharif, "Egypt's top religious authority condemns Islamic State," *Reuters Africa*, August 12, 2014, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://af.reuters.com/article/egyptNews/idAFL6N0QI3DS20140812>; Nash Jenkins, "Muslims Around the World Speak Out Against Terrorist Attacks in Paris," *Time*, November 14, 2015, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://time.com/4112830/muslims-paris-terror-attacks-islam-condemn/>; Carol E. Lee, Julian E. Barnes, and Adam Entous, "World Leaders Pledge Strong Response to Paris Attacks," *Wall Street Journal*, November 15, 2015, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/obama-erdogan-pledge-joint-response-to-islamic-state-menace-1447587892>; Ella Landau-Tasseron, *Delegitimizing ISIS On Islamic Grounds: Criticism Of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi By Muslim Scholars*, (Washington, DC: The Middle East Media Research Institute), 2015.

⁹⁰ "History," The Organization for Islamic Cooperation, accessed March 16, 2016, http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/page/?p_id=52&p_ref=26&lan=en; "Ambassador Gokcen Addresses the Security Council," Organization of Islamic Cooperation Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations in New York, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.oicun.org/9/20150330040802468.html>.

⁹¹ Anne Barnard and Rob Nordland, "Militants' Killing of Jordanian Pilot Unites the Arab World in Anger," *New York Times*, February 4, 2015, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/05/world/middleeast/arab-world-unites-in-anger-after-burning-of-jordanian-pilot.html>.

⁹² The pronouncement of a Muslim as an apostate, or *Takfir*, entails proclaiming the individual as an unbeliever (*kafir*) and thus sanctions violence against him. Militant groups, drawing upon the thought of Sayyid Qutb and Ibn Taymiyyah among others, utilize this concept as a justification for their actions. See Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 312; Stern and Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, 269.

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would essentially carry a death sentence.⁹³ Al-Azhar's refusal to proclaim heresy has, however, provoked questioning from Muslims and non-Muslims alike who have argued that the discrepancy is counterintuitive.⁹⁴

Apparent discrepancies such as the aforementioned one have fueled discussion amongst critics as to whether ideological currents of violence, seen in their extreme form in the Islamic State, pervade other movements within the larger corpus of Islam itself.⁹⁵ In other words, *it is argued that the Islamic State practices what some other widely accepted Muslim entities preach.*⁹⁶ The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as one of the more prominent members of the OIC and the location of the permanent secretariat of the OIC (Jeddah), is commonly offered as an example.

Though the Kingdom has publicly denounced the Islamic State,⁹⁷ critics note that Islam is the official religion in Saudi Arabia with no protection of religious freedom.⁹⁸ To this effect, despite having an estimated 1.5 million Christian guest workers, no churches are

⁹³ "Al-Azhar: The Islamic State (ISIS) Is A Terrorist Organization, But It Must Not Be Accused Of Heresy," The Middle East Media Research Institute, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/print8343.htm>.

⁹⁴ Ahmed Fouad, "Al-Azhar Refuses to Consider the Islamic State an Apostate," *Al-Monitor*, February 12, 2015, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/en/originals/2015/02/azhar-egypt-radicals-islamic-state-apostates.html>.

⁹⁵ Fr. Samir Khalil Samir offers his opinion that, "we hear, very often, Muslims say: 'This has nothing to do with Islam.' This is a spontaneous reaction of Muslims on the street. But, in fact, it's a false reaction. This is a part of Islam, and we can find it in the Qur'an itself and much more in the life of Mohammed, who had a very strong and violent attitude toward unbelievers. The main thing to note is that violence is an element of Islam. Violence is not an element of Christianity. When Christians were using violence in wars and so on, they were not following the Gospel, nor the life of Christ. When Muslims are using it, they are following the Quran and the sunnah and Mohammed's model. This is a very important point." See Edward Pentin, "Father Samir on ISIS: 'What They Are Doing Is Diabolical,'" *National Catholic Register*, September 2, 2014, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/father-samir-on-isis-what-they-are-doing-is-diabolical/#ixzz42oYvOpZ6>.

⁹⁶ See, for example, "Egyptian TV Host Ibrahim Issa: Nobody Dares to Admit That ISIS Crimes Are Based on Islamic Sources," The Middle East Media Research Institute, accessed March 16, 2016, http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/4773.htm; "Kuwaiti Researcher Abdulazziz Al-Qattan: ISIS Is the Product of Islamic Heritage," The Middle East Media Research Institute, accessed March 16, 2016, http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/4821.htm; "Egyptian Researcher Ahmad Abdou Maher: ISIS Implements Islamic Heritage Taught by Al-Azhar," The Middle East Media Research Institute, accessed March 16, 2016, http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/5234.htm.

⁹⁷ Nawaf Obaid, "Only Saudi Arabia Can Defeat Isis," December 22, 2015, *The Guardian*, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/22/saudi-arabia-isis-us-terrorists-coalition>.

⁹⁸ John Allen, *The Global War on Christians*, (New York: Crown, 2013), 138 – 142.

allowed in the country.⁹⁹ The example is often cited of the Saudi Grand Mufti, who as the highest religious official in the country, recently called for the destruction of all churches in the Arabian Peninsula region.¹⁰⁰ Reports of state approved primary and secondary school textbooks repeatedly containing references to discrimination and violence only served to fuel these arguments further.¹⁰¹ These textbooks are distributed throughout the Saudi public school system, to the academies it runs in many capitals of nations throughout the world and to other Islamic schools globally.¹⁰² Literal examples of the violence in the textbooks include: *Christians are enemies of the Muslims and there is perpetual clash with them; the Crusades have not ended and the "Crusader Threat" continues; legally the life of a Christian is worth a fraction of that of a free Muslim male; Christians are swine; and Muslims are to hate Christians.*¹⁰³

3. Pope Francis and Forging a Path to Peace

3.1 Overview and Context

Pope Francis has generally articulated his pontificate as one of "building bridges," particularly with followers of Islam.¹⁰⁴ Known for his efforts toward interreligious

⁹⁹ Ibid; Nina Shea, "Obama and the Churches of Saudi Arabia," *New York Times*, February 13, 2015, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303563304579443534070918824>.

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, "مفتى السعودية يدعو لهدم كل كنائس شبه الجزيرة," *Mideast Christian News*, March 13, 2012, accessed March 16, 2016, http://www.mcndirect.com/showsubject_ar.aspx?id=32143; Tom Heneghan, "Europe Bishops Slam Saudi Fatwa Against Gulf Churches," *Reuters*, March 23, 2012, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-christians-fatwa-idUSBRE82M1D720120323>.

¹⁰¹ Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom and the Institute for Gulf Affairs, *Saudi Arabia's Curriculum of Intolerance*, (Washington, DC: Center For Religious Freedom, 2006), accessed March 16, 2016, freedomhouse.org/report/special-reports/saudi-arabias-curriculum-intolerance#.VOEFSXyhV0.

¹⁰² Ibid, 15-17.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 23-30.

¹⁰⁴ Francis himself has explained: "One of the titles of the Bishop of Rome is Pontiff, that is, a builder of bridges with God and between people. My wish is that the dialogue between us should help to build bridges connecting all people, in such a way that everyone can see in the other not an enemy, not a rival, but a brother or sister to be welcomed and embraced! My own origins impel me to work for the building of bridges. As you know, my family is of Italian origin; and so this dialogue between places and cultures a great distance apart matters greatly to me, this dialogue between one end of the world and the other, which today are growing ever closer, more interdependent, more in need of opportunities to meet and to create real spaces of authentic fraternity. In this work, the role of religion is fundamental. It is not possible to build bridges between people while forgetting God. But the converse is also true: it is not possible to establish true links with God, while ignoring other people. Hence it is important to intensify dialogue among the various religions, and I am thinking particularly of dialogue with Islam. At the Mass marking the beginning

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dialogue in Argentina, he has continued to emphasize a respect for Islam and individual Muslims during the diplomacy of his pontificate. He has faced increasingly complex challenges due to the ever-evolving threat of violence carried out by terrorist groups professing the Islamic faith.

It is important to keep the diplomacy of Pope Francis in context following that of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI. In particular, the memory of the address at Regensburg denouncing violence in the name of Islam seems ever present in the minds of Christians and Muslims alike. Some have affirmed a certain courage illustrated by Benedict in speaking clearly while others viewed the comments as disrespectful and inciting violence. In referencing a dialogue from the late 14th century between a Byzantine emperor and an educated Persian regarding violence, faith and reason, Benedict quoted the Byzantine Emperor, here in pertinent part:

Without descending to details, such as the difference in treatment accorded to those who have the "Book" and the "infidels", he addresses his interlocutor with a startling brusqueness, a brusqueness that we find unacceptable, on the central question about the relationship between religion and violence in general, saying: "Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." The emperor, after having expressed himself so forcefully, goes on to explain in detail the reasons why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul. "God", he says, "is not pleased by blood - and not acting reasonably (σὺν λόγῳ) is contrary to God's nature."¹⁰⁵

of my ministry, I greatly appreciated the presence of so many civil and religious leaders from the Islamic world. And it is also important to intensify outreach to non-believers, so that the differences which divide and hurt us may never prevail, but rather the desire to build true links of friendship between all peoples, despite their diversity." Pope Francis, *Address to Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See*, Vatican Website, March 22, 2013, accessed September 4, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/march/documents/papa-francesco_20130322_corpo-diplomatico.html.

¹⁰⁵Pope Benedict XVI, *Regensburg Address*, Vatican Website, September 12, 2006, accessed September 4, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html.

The address itself set off uproar within global Islamic community. Peaceful and respectful critique of Benedict's mode of expression ensued along with, regrettably, the very same violence of which Benedict was attempting to denounce.¹⁰⁶

The situation for Pope Francis, thus, is nuanced with complexities with regard to continuing to "build bridges" and forge a path to peace. Without speaking to the service or disservice of Pope Benedict XVI's remarks did to papal diplomacy with Muslim nations, it is undeniable that tensions were elevated because of them. With that brief contextual overview in mind, the following are emblematic of the viewpoints Francis has expressed.

3.2 Francis on Islam, Muslims and the Islamic State

Francis has sought to avoid broad generalizations regarding Islam and Muslims. He has, for example, cautioned that "faced with disconcerting episodes of violent fundamentalism, our respect for true followers of Islam should lead us to avoid hateful generalizations, for authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Qur'an are opposed to every form of violence."¹⁰⁷ He as further noted that he "sincerely believe that we cannot say all Muslims are terrorists, just as we cannot say that all Christians are fundamentalists – we also have fundamentalists among us, all religions have these small groups."¹⁰⁸ He has thus reiterated that "that it is not right to identify Islam with violence. It is not right and it is not true."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ See for example, Ian Fisher, "Muslim Leaders Assail Pope's Speech on Islam," *New York Times*, September 14, 2006, accessed September 4, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/14/world/europe/15papalncd.html?_r=0; Associated Press, "Pope Deeply Sorry for Comments on Islam," *NBC News*, September 17, 2006, accessed September 4, 2016, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/14871562/ns/world_news-europe/t/pope-deeply-sorry-comments-islam/#.V83AiGXYqHo; Alan Cooperman, "Pope Sorry for About Reaction to Islam Remark," *Washington Post*, September 18, 2006, accessed September 4, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2006/09/18/pope-sorry-about-reaction-to-islam-remark/87080924-2f9b-4517-9d14-8788f048def2/>.

¹⁰⁷ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* Apostolic Exhortation on The Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, Vatican Website, November 24, 2013, accessed March 16, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html, Sec. 253.

¹⁰⁸ Pope Francis, *In-flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis From Istanbul to Rome*, Vatican Website, November 30, 2014, accessed September 4, 2016 https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/november/documents/papa-francesco_20141130_turchia-conferenza-stampa.html.

¹⁰⁹ Pope Francis, *In-flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis From Poland to Rome*, Vatican Website, July 31, 2016, accessed September 4, 2016, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/ar/speeches/2016/july/documents/papa-francesco_20160731_polonia-conferenza-stampa.html.

Francis has been clear, however, in his request for condemnation of the Islamic State as well as in his request for international political and religious condemnation from other world leaders. In speaking with President Erdogan of Turkey regarding the need of all religious leaders, scholars, clerics, intellectuals and politicians to issue a clear condemnation against ISIS, Francis stated that “there needs to be international condemnation from Muslims across the world. It must be said, ‘no, this is not what the Qur’an is about!’”¹¹⁰ Responding to the question of military intervention, Pope Francis has spoken in general terms, indicating “that when there is in fact an unjust aggressor, he must be stopped.”¹¹¹ He has even acknowledged a genocide of Christians in Middle East.¹¹² Francis has remained clear, however, in his making the distinction between ISIS and the nature of Islam. He has explained that:

Yes, we can say that the so-called ISIS is an Islamic state that acknowledges itself as violent, because when they lay their cards on the table, they slit the throats of Egyptians on the Libyan coast and do similar things. But this is a little fundamentalist group called ISIS. But you cannot say – I believe it is false and unjust – that Islam is terrorism (“terrorista”).¹¹³

As to the ideologies sustaining the Islamic State, Francis has seemingly attempted to walk a finer line. In still sustaining his respect for Islam as such and Muslims as believers, he seems to frame the issue more in terms of interpretation instead of inherent qualities. For example, he explains that:

Today, I don’t think that there is a fear of Islam as such but of ISIS and its war of conquest, which is partly drawn from Islam. It is true that the idea of conquest is inherent in the soul of Islam. However, it is also possible to interpret the objective

¹¹⁰ Pope Francis, *In-flight Press Conference From Istanbul to Rome*.

¹¹¹ Pope Francis, *In-flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis From Korea to Rome*, Vatican Website, August 18, 2014, accessed September 4, 2016, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/august/documents/papa-francesco_20140818_corea-conferenza-stampa.html.

¹¹² See for example, Pope Francis, *Address of the Holy Father to the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements*, Vatican Website, July 9, 2015, accessed September 4, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco_20150709_bolivia-movimenti-popolari.html; Pope Francis, *Mass for the Faithful of the Armenian Right*, Vatican Website, April 12, 2015, accessed September 4, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150412_omelia-fedeli-rito-armeno.html.

¹¹³ Pope Francis, *In-flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis From Poland to Rome*.

in Matthew's Gospel, where Jesus sends his disciples to all nations, in terms of the same idea of conquest.¹¹⁴

In framing the issue in these terms, he has acknowledged the diffusion of anti-Christian discrimination and "something behind it" that is "not good" in this regard:

"It's true, I'm not going to soften my words, no. We Christians are being chased out of the Middle East. In some cases, as we have seen in Iraq, in the Mosul area, they have to leave or pay a tax which then makes no sense. And other times they push us out wearing white gloves...It's as if they wished that there were no more Christians, that nothing remain of Christianity. In that region this is happening. It's true, it's first of all a result of terrorism, but when it's done diplomatically with white gloves, it's because there's something behind it. This is not good."¹¹⁵

Francis has also expressed the notion that western involvement can also contribute to destabilization. He thus states that, "*In the face of Islamic terrorism, it would therefore be better to question ourselves about the way in an overly Western model of democracy has been exported to countries such as Iraq, where a strong government previously existed.*"¹¹⁶ He then has gone on, however, to affirm the values that lie at the heart of such Western models of democracy:

Confessional states end badly. That goes against the grain of History. I believe that a version of laicity accompanied by a solid law guaranteeing religious freedom offers a framework for going forward. We are all equal as sons (and daughters) of God and with our personal dignity. However, everyone must have the freedom to externalize his or her own faith. If a Muslim woman wishes to wear a veil, she must be able to do so. Similarly, if a Catholic wishes to wear a cross. People must

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ The "jizya" tax is reportedly making a comeback in Egypt, as well as in Iraq, and Syria. See Jessica Chasmar, "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood to Coptic Christians: Convert to Islam, or Pay Jizya Tax," *Washington Times*, September 10, 2013, accessed September 4, 2016, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/sep/10/egypts-muslim-brotherhood-convert-islam-or-pay-jiz/>; Jiyar Gol, "Iraqi Christians Flee After Isis Issue Mosul Ultimatum," *BBC NEWS*, July 18, 2014, accessed September 4, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28381455>; Kelly Phillips Erb, "Islamic State Warns Christians: Convert, Pay Tax, Leave Or Die," *Forbes*, July 19, 2014, accessed September 4, 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kellyphillipserb/2014/07/19/islamic-state-warns-christians-convert-pay-tax-leave-or-die/>.

¹¹⁶ Guillaume Goubert and Sébastien Maillard, "Interview [with] Pope Francis," *La Croix*.

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be free to profess their faith at the heart of their own culture not merely at its margins.¹¹⁷

Along with this affirmation, Francis has then, in conclusion, appealed to those states that do not respect the religious freedom of Christians:

Our relationship with the followers of Islam has taken on great importance, since they are now significantly present in many traditionally Christian countries, where they can freely worship and become fully a part of society...I ask and I humbly entreat those countries to grant Christians freedom to worship and to practice their faith, in light of the freedom which followers of Islam enjoy in Western countries!¹¹⁸

3.3 Criticism of the Diplomacy of Pope Francis

The efforts of Pope Francis have not come without substantial criticism from various circles. For some, he has not been strong enough in confronting the violence associated with terrorism carried out by groups professing the Islamic faith. For others, particularly the Islamic State itself, attention has been clearly fixated upon the mission of Pope Francis to “build bridges.” The following are emblematic of the general types of criticism directed toward his efforts.

For those who argue that Francis is not strong enough in his critique of violence associated with Islam, arguments focus on the apparent contradiction of arguing against generalizations by making generalizations at the same time. In other words, statements such as “faced with disconcerting episodes of violent fundamentalism, our respect for true followers of Islam should lead us to avoid hateful generalizations, for authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Qur’an are opposed to every form of violence...” fail to address the real battle being waged for the soul of Islam and make the necessary distinctions to have effective dialogue.¹¹⁹ Critical evaluations point out, as the argument

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Sec. 252, 253.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., Sec. 253. Fr. Samir Khalil Samir had this to say: There are so many positive things in *Evangelii gaudium*, its urging Christians and Muslims towards a relationship in love and truth, to work for peace, to enrich each other, to welcome immigrants ... But there are also some points that provoke criticism: is the “compassionate and merciful” God of the Muslims really the same as the Trinity? And are the Jesus and Mary in the Koran the same as the Gospels? And is Christian fundamentalism the same as Muslim fundamentalism? What is really urgent - as suggested by Francis – is “a proper reading of the Koran,” which

goes, that there exist affirmations of discrimination and violence from many of the more diffusive movements within Islam, such as that which is practiced in Saudi Arabia.¹²⁰

The Islamic State in a recent issue of its *Dabiq* propaganda magazine devoted an article to explaining their view of the efforts of Pope Francis. An example of their view is found in the following excerpt:

Despite the clarity of past and perished popes regarding their enmity for Islam and its teachings, the current pope, Francis, has struggled against reality to advertise the apostate's perversion of Islamic teachings as the actual religion of Muslims. So while Benedict and many before him emphasized the enmity between the pagan Christians and monotheistic Muslims, Francis' work is notably more subtle, steering clear of confrontational words that would offend those who falsely claim Islam, those apostates whom the Crusaders found played the perfect role for their infiltration into Muslim lands. While Benedict XVI met public disapproval for quoting a centuries-old Byzantine emperor, Francis continues to hide behind a deceptive veil of "good will," covering his actual intentions of pacifying the Muslim nation. This is exemplified in Francis' statement that "our respect for true followers of Islam should lead us to avoid hateful generalizations, for authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Quran are opposed to every form of violence."¹²¹

Giving further perspective, in conclusion, is the following:

While previous popes spoke against Islam due to the actual reality they faced, based on mutual enmity between the pagan Christians and monotheistic Muslims, recent popes – and especially Pope Francis – have attempted to paint a picture of heartwarming friendship, seeking to steer Muslim masses away from the obligation of waging jihad against disbelief. Assisting the Crusaders in their aim at placation, [Ahmed] el-Tayeb said of his dear friend Francis, "this man is a man of peace, a man who follows the teaching of Christianity, which is a religion of love and peace ... a man who respects other religions and shows consideration for their followers."¹²²

Muslims resist." See Fr. Samir Khalil Samir, "Pope Francis and His Invitation to Dialogue with Islam," *Asia News*, December 19, 2013, accessed September 4, 2016, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Pope-Francis-and-his-invitation-to-dialogue-with-islam-29858.html>.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ "In the Words of the Enemy," *Dabiq*, July 2016, 75.

¹²² Ibid., 76.

3.4 Responding to the Criticism of the Holy Father

It seems reasonable to assume that Francis is trying to stay within the boundaries of two general markers. The first marker would be a clear defense of the rights of those persecuted Christians and religious minorities. The second marker would be the difficulties that ensued from the remarks of his predecessor, Benedict XVI, at Regensburg and attempting to keep open lines of communication.

As to the first, this seems clear enough. Francis has spoken on the issue of persecuted Christians numerous times and very eloquently.¹²³ As to the second marker, however, the difficulty lies finding what truly is the most efficacious mode of action. On the one hand, Francis does not want to play into the hands of entities such as the Islamic State and give them propaganda to incite more violence. He does seem intent on defending the rights of the oppressed, as is his duty, and in identifying the existence of problematic ideological currents within the vastness of the great ocean of Islam itself.

As the Holy Father attempts to walk this fine line between clear condemnation of the violence along with the violent ideologies underlying that violence on the one hand and a friendship with the Islamic world on the other, we are left to wait and see where his diplomacy will ultimately lead. As he navigates this difficult juridical, political and religious landscape, it seems important to keep his admonition below in mind:

In order to sustain dialogue with Islam, suitable training is essential for all involved, not only so that they can be solidly and joyfully grounded in their own identity, but so that they can also acknowledge the values of others, appreciate the concerns underlying their demands and shed light on shared beliefs.¹²⁴

In conclusion, the words of Fr. Samir Khalil Samir seem opportune in this regard. A noted figure in interreligious dialogue, he offers clarity and respect in his assessment of the situation. This is perhaps the support that the Holy Father needs in “building bridges.” Here, in responding to those affirming the notion of true Islam as tolerance and peace with no association to the Islamic State, Fr. Samir emphasized:

¹²³ See for example, Geoffrey Strickland, “Pope Francis and the Persecution of Christians,” *International Center for Law, Life, Faith and Family*, accessed September 4, 2016, <http://icolf.org/fact/pope-francis-and-the-persecution-of-christians/>.

¹²⁴ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Sec. 253.

The first thing, I would say, is that it is a beautiful act that responds to the discourse of the Pope saying that we know that Islam is not violent in its essence... I am convinced that a great part – the majority – of Muslims agree with this, don't want war and don't want terrorism. On the other hand, it must be said that in the Qur'an there are words and phrases of violence and at the beginning of the VII century violence was a part of the Bedouin tradition, to survive, so to speak. Thus, that the opinion of the majority of Muslims that [Islam] is totally opposed to terrorism I believe is correct, this is certain. On the other hand, to say that Islam does not have or contain any violence is not true. This is to say there exists both aspects. When Muslims say in general: "Daesh and terrorism are not Muslim and have nothing to do with Islam," this is not precise. Thus, it must be said that this exists: the majority of Muslims do not want it. The solution, which many Muslims have proposed for some time, is: we need to reinterpret the Qur'an and the tradition of Muhammad, which is to say to situate in its historical context as we do for the Old Testament. We must read it with the eyes of today and present day thought and say: That was for a time that has past. Many Muslims think this for Islam, and say: we cannot take it literally, but we must interpret it. I can give witness that they seek peace, and want it, but not all, unfortunately... That which we have need of is, first of all, teaching that is absolutely opposed to violence, that is declared in books, teaching, documents and acts.¹²⁵

Conclusion

With a broad overview of Islam and the Islamic State, generally, it is hoped that one can appreciate the complex juridical, political and religious landscape that Pope Francis must navigate in searching for peace. Responding to the challenges presented by geopolitical terrorism carried out by those professing the Islamic faith is and will continue to be one of the defining issues of the 21st century. Let us pray that all believers may find a path to peace and may we not forget to pray for Pope Francis as well, who repeatedly asks our prayers for his leadership of the Church.

¹²⁵ Samir Khalil Samir, "Educazione e concretezza contro l'estremismo islamico," *Vatican Radio*, August 23, 2016, accessed September 4, 2016, http://it.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/08/23/p_samir_maggioranza_islamici_opposti_al_terrorismo/1253150. (Note the contents of the original article are in Italian and were translated into English by the present author for this article.)