

Author's final draft version of Jon Hoover, 'Ibn Taymiyya between Moderation and Radicalism', in *Reclaiming Islamic Tradition: Modern Interpretations of the Classical Heritage*, ed. Elisabeth Kendall and Ahmad Khan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 177-203.

Ibn Taymiyya between Moderation and Radicalism¹

Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) was one of the most incisive and controversial religious scholars in the middle period of the Islamic tradition, and his writings have been read and marshaled to diverse ends in the modern era.² The Tunisian thinker Abū Ya‘rub al-Marzūqī (b. 1947) sees Ibn Taymiyya as a great philosopher heralding a modern philosophical nominalism,³ and the Pakistani intellectual and University of Chicago professor Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988) took Ibn Taymiyya as a model for his reformist modernism.⁴ The centrism (*wasāṭiyya*) of Qatarī-based scholar Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī (b. 1926) harks back to Ibn Taymiyya's advocacy of the golden mean (*wasat*) in matters of doctrine,⁵ and al-Qaradāwī invokes Ibn Taymiyya in support of positive political engagement in a plural society,⁶ a pragmatic jurisprudence of balancing benefits and harms,⁷ and a strictly defensive approach to jihad against unbelievers.⁸ Moreover, Saudi Arabian Wahhābism;⁹ religious reform movements in nineteenth and early

¹ I would like to thank David Warren for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

² There is as yet no comprehensive study and assessment of Ibn Taymiyya's reception in the modern world.

³ Georges Tamer, 'The Curse of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya as a Philosopher in Contemporary Islamic Thought', *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya*, ed. Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 329-74 (361-9).

⁴ See especially Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism*, ed. Ebrahim Moosa (Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 1999). Rahman writes, 'We shall argue that for a genuine reconstruction of Islam to occur, the threads have to be traced back to Ibn Taymiyya with a reconsideration of certain factors' (p. 132). Martin Riexinger, 'Ibn Taymiyya's Worldview and the Challenge of Modernity: A Conflict among the Ahl-i Ḥadīth in British India', in *Debating Ibn Taymiyya*, 493-517, critiques Muslim modernist appropriation of Ibn Taymiyya as inconsistent with his *ḥadīth*-based vision.

⁵ Bettina Gräf, 'The Concept of *Wasāṭiyya* in the Work of Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī', in *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi*, ed. Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen and Bertina Gräf (London: Hurst, 2009), 213-38.

⁶ Mona Hassan, 'Modern Interpretations and Misinterpretations of a Medieval Scholar: Apprehending the Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyya', in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 338-66 (351-5).

⁷ Andrew March, *Islam and Liberal Citizenship: The Search for an Overlapping Consensus* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press), 253, 264.

⁸ Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age: Religious Thought and Internal Criticism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 265-6, 304-5.

⁹ Key works on Wahhābism and Saudi Arabia include Guido Steinberg, *Religion Und Staat in Saudi-Arabien: Die Wahhabitischen Gelehrten 1902-1953* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2002); David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006); 'Abd Allāh Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn, *Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb: The Man and his Works* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009); Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Stéphane Lacroix,

twentieth-century Iraq,¹⁰ Syria,¹¹ Yemen,¹² India¹³ and Egypt;¹⁴ and the contemporary global Salafī phenomenon that originated in Saudi Arabia in the 1960s¹⁵ have all looked to Ibn Taymiyya for inspiration and appealed to his authority for legitimacy. Beyond this, Ibn Taymiyya is the main medieval Muslim authority cited by contemporary Muslim extremists, and the most forceful use of his writings for radical purposes is found in *Al-Farīda al-ghā'iba* (*The Neglected Duty*) by the electrician 'Abd al-Salām Faraj (d. 1982). This treatise served to justify Islamic Jihad's assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981. Faraj quotes Ibn Taymiyya's fatwas against the Mongols and his fatwa on the legal status of Mardin, a city today in southern Turkey, in the course of arguing that rulers who fail to uphold Islamic law are apostates and must be fought.¹⁶

Faraj's interpretation of Ibn Taymiyya's fatwas has not gone uncontested, both in Egypt and beyond, and one particularly sophisticated counter-interpretation is found in the writings of Yahya Michot (b. 1952), currently a professor at Hartford Seminary in the USA. Michot argues vigorously that Faraj and his ilk are unfaithful to Ibn Taymiyya's intention, and, similar to al-Qaradāwī, he understands Ibn Taymiyya instead to be a moderate and

Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Nabil Mouline, *The Clerics of Islam: Religious Authority and Political Power in Saudi Arabia*, trans. Ethan S. Rundell (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).

¹⁰ Itzhak Weismann, 'Genealogies of Fundamentalism: Salafi Discourse in Nineteenth-Century Baghdad', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36.2 (2009): 267-80; Basheer M. Nafi, 'Salafism Revived: Nu' mān Al-Alūsī and the Trial of Two Aḥmads', *Die Welt des Islams* 49 (2009): 49-97.

¹¹ David Dean Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Itzhak Weismann, *Taste of Modernity: Sufism, Salafiyya, and Arabism in Late Ottoman Damascus* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

¹² Bernard Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad Al-Shawkānī* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹³ Claudia Preckel, 'Screening Ṣiddīq Hasan Khān's Library: The Use of Ḥanbalī Literature in 19th-Century Bhopal', in *Debating Ibn Taymiyya*, 162-219.

¹⁴ Especially with Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), on whom see Charles Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt; a Study of the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muḥammad 'Abduh* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1933), 202-4.

¹⁵ Key contributions to the study of contemporary Salafism include Quintan Wiktorowicz, 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29 (2006): 207-39; Roel Meijer, ed., *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (London: Hurst, 2009); Laurent Bonnefoy, *Salafism in Yemen: Transnationalism and Religious Identity* (London: Hurst, 2011); Terje Østebø, *Localising Salafism: Religious Change among Oromo Muslims in Bale, Ethiopia* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Richard Gauvain, *Salafī Ritual Purity: In the Presence of God* (London: Routledge, 2013); Chanfī Ahmed, *West African 'ulamā' and Salafism in Mecca and Medina: Jawāb Al-Ifriqī - The Response of the African* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Lloyd Ridgeon, ed., *Sufis and Salafis in the Contemporary Age* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). On the genealogy of the appellation 'Salafism', see Henri Lauzière, 'The Construction of Salafiyya: Reconsidering Salafism from the Perspective of Conceptual History', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 (2010): 369-89.

¹⁶ Johannes J.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins* (New York: Macmillan, 1986; reprint, New York: RVP Press, 2013), which includes a full translation of Faraj's *Al-Farīda al-ghā'iba* (151-229). Page references will be to the reprint edition, the pagination of which differs slightly from that of the original edition. The reprint also includes a photocopy of the Arabic text (1-55, Arabic). Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 191-222, also provides an account of Islamic Jihad and the assassination of Sadat.

pragmatic scholar who offers vision for Muslims seeking to live constructive and engaged lives in society, even in minority situations. The title of Michot's 2012 book *Against Extremisms* well captures his understanding of Ibn Taymiyya. On Michot's reading, the fourteenth-century jurist sought to avoid extremes in personal piety and behavior and encouraged prudence and good will in interaction with others; he cannot be used to justify today's Islamist extremism.¹⁷

Michot rejects three claims that he finds commonly asserted, whether in the thought of Islamist radicals or in scholarly analysis: 1) that Ibn Taymiyya provides justification for declaring rulers apostate and fighting them; 2) that he holds a dualistic black and white view of the world divided into a domain of peace and a domain of war; and 3) that he readily declares Muslims who do not agree with him unbelievers and apostates.¹⁸ This study examines how Michot overcomes the first two claims as they relate most directly to violent jihadism. As for the third, it will suffice to say here that Michot, following his usual custom, translates a number of Ibn Taymiyya's texts to show that he was normally reticent to call fellow Muslims unbelievers and apostates, especially if there were extenuating circumstances.¹⁹

Before discussing Michot's responses to the first two questions, I will situate Ibn Taymiyya's anti-Mongol fatwas in historical context and sketch a spectrum of their modern interpretations. In the latter part of the study, I look at how Michot deploys his Taymiyyan political theology in response to the Arab Spring of 2011 and then reflect on the key theme of utilitarianism that emerges from the preceding investigation. What will become apparent is that Ibn Taymiyya's utilitarianism lends itself to diverse uses, with both jihadists and Michot equally engaged in a creative process of appropriating Taymiyyan texts to their respective visions of Muslim life in the world today.

Ibn Taymiyya's anti-Mongol fatwas

The historical context of Ibn Taymiyya's anti-Mongol fatwas is the Mongol menace to the Mamlūk sultanate of Syria and Egypt. The Mongol invaders from Central Asia struck deep into the traditional Muslim heartlands and conquered Baghdad in 1258, but in 1260 the

¹⁷ Yahya Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya: Against Extremisms* (Beirut: Dar Albouraq, 1433/2012). The book consists of English renderings of Michot's earlier translations of Taymiyyan texts into French.

¹⁸ Michot, *Against Extremisms*, xxi; Yahya M. Michot, 'Ibn Taymiyya', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Gerhard Bowering (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 238-41 (239).

¹⁹ On the third question, see especially Michot, *Against Extremisms*, 34-82, which is a full translation of Yahya Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya: Mécréance et pardon* (Beirut: Dar Al-Bouraq, 1426/2005).

Mamlūks thwarted their further advance westward into Syria. Nonetheless, the Mongols continued to threaten Syria periodically into the early 1300s. The winter of 1299-1300 saw the most successful campaign. The Īlkhānid Mongol ruler Ghāzān (r. 1295-1304), a convert to Sunnī Islam, defeated a Mamlūk army and occupied Damascus for three months. The Mongols then abandoned the city upon hearing rumors that a new Mamlūk army was approaching from Egypt. Ibn Taymiyya did not resist the Mongol occupation but instead engaged the Mongols in diplomacy to free prisoners and avert further bloodshed. Ghāzān embarked on another invasion of Syria the following winter. Ibn Taymiyya preached jihad to rally the Mamlūks and called on the people of Damascus to resist. However, Ghāzān, for unknown reasons, aborted his mission before reaching the city. Two years later, in the spring of 1303, Ghāzān attempted a third invasion of Syria but was defeated by a Mamlūk army before he could threaten Damascus. Later on in 1312 Ghāzān's successor Uljaytū (d. 1317), a convert to Shi'ism, tried to invade Syria again, but to no avail.²⁰

The fact that the Mongols confessed to being Muslims sowed doubts in Syrian minds about the legitimacy of fighting them since, according to traditional Islamic law, Muslims should not fight Muslims. This is the primary problem that Ibn Taymiyya addresses in three anti-Mongol fatwas printed in succession in volume 28 of the large collection of his writings *Majmū' fatāwā*.²¹ The third fatwa may be the first chronologically and perhaps dates to the first Mongol invasion in 1299-1300.²² The first fatwa probably dates a little later to the second and third Mongol invasions of 1300-1 and 1303.²³ These two fatwas argue that the Mongols (*al-Tatār*) must be fought even though they pronounce the Muslim confession of

²⁰ Denise Aigle, 'The Mongol Invasions of Bilād Al-Shām by Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymiyyah's Three 'Anti-Mongol' Fatwas', *Mamlūk Studies Review* 11.2 (2007): 89–120, available at http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/MSR_XI-2_2007-Aigle.pdf (last accessed 14 July 2014). For a detailed chronology of the three Mongol invasions in the period 1299 to 1303, see Jean R. Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya: Lettre a Un Roi Croisé (Al-Risālat al-Qubruṣiyya)* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Bruylant-Academia, 1995), 35-62. See also Reuven Amitai, 'The Mongol Occupation of Damascus in 1300: A Study of Mamluk Loyalties', in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syria Politics and Society*, ed. Michael Winter and Amalia Levanoni (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 21-39.

²¹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya* [MF], ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Qāsim and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad, 37 vols (Riyadh: Maṭābi' al-Riyād, 1961-67), 28:501-8 (first fatwa), 28:509-43 (second fatwa), and 28:544-53 (third fatwa); the reprint of MF (Medina: Mujaḥmā' al-Malik Fahd, 2004) is typeset differently but retains the pagination of the original and is available at <<https://archive.org/details/mfsiainmmfsiainm>> (last accessed 14 July 2014). Faraj, *Al-Farīda al-ghā'iba*, accessed the second and third fatwas from an older collection of Ibn Taymiyya's works: *Kitāb majmū'at fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya* [KMF], 5 vol. (Cairo: Matba'at Kurdistān al-'ilmīyya, 1326-9/1908-11), 4:280-98 (second fatwa) and 4:298-302 (third fatwa); this collection is known in jihadist circles as *Al-Fatāwā al-kubrā* or simply *Fatāwā*.

²² Aigle, 'Mongol Invasions', 117.

²³ Aigle, 'Mongol Invasions', 117, suggests that this fatwa dates to the Mongol occupation of Damascus in 1300 when Ibn Taymiyya was mediating between the Mongols and the local population. However, the fatwa inquiry (MF 28:501) speaks of the Mongol invasion 1299-1300 as already come and gone.

faith. The Mongols were not just Muslim rebels (*ahl al-baghy*) rising up against a particular Muslim leader as when Mu‘āwiya fought against the fourth caliph ‘Alī at the battle of Şiffīn in 657. Rather, they had abandoned some of the laws of Islam after the fashion of the Khārījīs and those who forbade paying *zakāt* in the days of the first caliph Abū Bakr (d. 634). The Mongols, explains Ibn Taymiyya, failed to uphold the Shari‘a in full and forbid pagan worship; they colluded with unbelievers such as Christians and idolaters; and they did not fight on behalf of Islam but only to gain hegemony. Thus, it was obligatory to wage jihad against them.

Muslim jurists had traditionally grouped the Khārījīs and those who withheld *zakāt* from Abū Bakr together with Mu‘āwiya who fought ‘Alī at the Battle of Şiffīn into the one category of Muslim rebels (*bughāt*). The opposing combatants simply held different interpretations (*ta’wīl*) of the political circumstances due to differences in independent legal reasoning (*ijtihād*), and these differences did not endanger their status as Muslims. Ibn Taymiyya, however, divided combatants into those who adhered to the laws of Islam (*sharā’i’ al-Islām*), such as ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya, and those who did not, such as the Khārījīs and those who withheld *zakāt* from Abū Bakr. Whereas Mu‘āwiya was merely a political rebel, the Khawārij and those who withheld *zakāt* were religious heretics. So far as it was practically possible, the latter had to be fought until they followed the established laws of religion in full.²⁴

Ibn Taymiyya’s second and longest anti-Mongol fatwa repeats the argument of the first and third fatwas that the Mongols had to be fought because they resembled the Khārījīs.²⁵ However, Ibn Taymiyya also now details what he believes to be the Mongols’ corrupt vision of Islam, and he censures them for converting to Shi‘ism.²⁶ This, along with various historical allusions, dates the second fatwa to after the conversion of the Mongol Īlkhānid ruler Uljaytu to Twelver Shi‘ism in 1309 and most likely to Uljaytu’s attempt to invade Syria in 1312.²⁷

²⁴ Aigle, ‘Mongol Invasions’, 101-2. For further exposition of Ibn Taymiyya’s distinction between political rebels such as Mu‘āwiya and religious heretics such as the Khārījīs from different texts, see Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 271-9.

²⁵ Ibn Taymiyya, MF 28:509-43.

²⁶ Ibid. 527.

²⁷ Aigle, ‘Mongol Invasions’, 117-120; Yahya Michot, ‘Textes spirituels d’Ibn Taymiyya. XII: Mongols et Mamlûks: l’état du monde musulman vers 709/1310 (suite)’, *Le Musulman* (Paris), 25 (Jan. 1995), 25-30 (30 n. 36); J. Y. Michot, ‘Un important témoin de l’histoire et de la société mamlûkes à l’époque des Īlkhāns et de la fin des Croisades: Ibn Taymiyya (ob. 728/1328)’, in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras: Proceedings of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 1992, 1993 and 1994*, ed. U. Vermeulen and D. DeSmet (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 335-53 (344 n. 30).

Despite the Mongols' confession of Islam, Ibn Taymiyya complains in the second fatwa about Mongol legal syncretism, religious laxity, and theological pluralism. Few among the Mongols fasted and practised the Muslim prayer while many among them were religious innovators such as Shi'īs and monistic Sūfīs. Additionally, the Mongols applied laws from the *yāsa*,²⁸ the pagan legal system of Genghis Khan, and they raised Genghis Khan to the same level as the Prophet Muḥammad, even confessing him to be the Son of God after the fashion of Christian belief about Christ. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya alleges, some Mongols regarded Islam, Judaism, and Christianity to be equally valid paths to God much as Sunnī Muslims recognized the equal legitimacy of their four law schools. The Mongol conversion to Shi'ism was particularly scandalous to Ibn Taymiyya because Shi'is had aligned with Christians to facilitate the Mongol conquests of central Muslims lands. Ibn Taymiyya combines the Mongols' affiliation with the treacherous Shi'is together with their use of Genghis Khan's legal system, the *yāsa*, to conclude that they are apostates (*murtaddūn*) even worse than those who withheld *zakāt* from Abū Bakr.²⁹

Modern interpretations of Ibn Taymiyya's anti-Mongol fatwas

'Abd al-Salām Faraj's *Farīda*, which provided the rationale for assassinating Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981, quotes extensively from Ibn Taymiyya's second and third anti-Mongol fatwas, along with some commentary from Ibn Taymiyya's student Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373) on Q. 5:50, to make the case that contemporary Muslim rulers are apostates and must be fought and replaced in order to establish an Islamic state.³⁰ The *Farīda* assimilates modern Muslim rulers to the Mongols just as Ibn Taymiyya assimilates the Mongols to the Khārijīs and those who withheld *zakāt* from Abū Bakr. Both modern Muslim rulers and the Mongols confess Islam, but they are nonetheless both apostates because they rule according to non-Islamic laws. Modern Muslim rulers who follow codes of law imported

²⁸ Recent studies on the *yāsa* and its relation to Islamic law include Denise Aigle, *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality: Studies in Anthropological History* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 134-156; David Morgan, 'The "Great Yasa of Chinggis Khan" Revisited', in *Mongols, Turks, and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*, ed. Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 291-308.

²⁹ Ibn Taymiyya, MF 28:520-31. For further exposition of the second fatwa, see Aigle, 'Mongol Invasions', 101-3, 111-20; Michot, *Lettre*, 62-70; and Michot, 'Un important témoin', 345-53. The text of MF 28:530 referring to the *yāsa* of Genghis Khan is corrupt; for correction and discussion, see Yahya Michot, 'Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya. XIII: Mongols et Mamlûks: l'état du monde musulman vers 709/1310 (fin)', *Le Musulman* (Paris), 25 (Sept. 1995), 25-30 (25-6 n. 7); and Michot, 'Un important témoin', 345-6.

³⁰ Ibn Kathīr's commentary on 'Do you desire the judgment of the Jāhiliyya' (Q. 5:50) condemns the Mongols for preferring the *yāsiq* (i.e. *yāsa*) legal system of Genghis Khan over the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet and explains that anyone who does that is an unbeliever (*kāfir*) who must be fought. For a translation of Ibn Kathīr's comments, see Michot, 'Un important témoin', 347 n. 38.

from imperialist unbelievers are in fact worse than the Mongols who ruled according to their *yāsa*, and the Mongols were worse than the Khārijīs and those who withheld *zakāt* from Abū Bakr. Thus, the *Farīda* reasons, it is obligatory to fight modern Muslim rulers just as it was obligatory to fight the Khārijīs and the Mongols.³¹ This justification for Islamic revolution, taken on its own, is powerful and coherent, and it continues to inform contemporary jihadist thinking.³²

Following Sadat's assassination, the Egyptian religious establishment quickly moved to situate Ibn Taymiyya's fatwas in historical context in order to show that the *Farīda* incorrectly assimilated modern rulers to the Mongols of Ibn Taymiyya's day. In a 1982 fatwa, the Egyptian Mufti Jād al-Ḥaqq 'Alī Jād al-Ḥaqq (d. 1996) argues that unbelief had not pervaded Egypt and that reasonably pious modern Muslim rulers were not comparable to the savage and irreligious Mongols that Ibn Taymiyya had observed. Jād al-Ḥaqq also prohibits calling Muslim rulers apostates, refutes the various Qur'ānic and legal arguments made in the *Farīda* concerning jihad, and invokes his authority as a religious scholar against the uneducated Faraj.³³

This sharp response to Faraj appears to have induced some jihadists to skirt the *Farīda* by widening their base of classical and medieval authorities beyond Ibn Taymiyya.³⁴ In 1988 the Egyptian 'Abd al-Qādir b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, also known as Dr Faḍl (b. 1950), published *al-'Umda*, a jihad manual widely used by al-Qā'ida.³⁵ While Ibn Taymiyya is the

³¹ In Jansen, *The Neglected Duty*, 160-8, 171-3 (§21-35, 40-2). For further analysis, see Rachel Scott, 'An "official" Islamic response to the Egyptian al-jihād movement', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 8.1 (2003): 39-61 (46-50); Emmanuel Sivan, 'Ibn Taymiyya: Father of the Islamic Revolution: Medieval Theology & Modern Politics', *Encounter* 60.5 (1983): 41-50.

³² See for example Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihad: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 59-74, which discusses Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī's relegation of the modern legal systems in Muslim countries to the domain of unbelief.

³³ Jād al-Ḥaqq 'Alī Jād al-Ḥaqq, 'Kutayb *al-Farīda al-ghā'iba* wa al-radd 'alayh' (3 January 1982), in *Al-Fatāwā al-Islāmiyya min dār al-iftā' al-Miṣriyya*, 2nd printing (Cairo: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1997), 3724-59 (vol. 10, no. 1326) (followed by the full text of *al-Farīda al-ghā'iba*, pp. 3761-91), available at <https://ia600500.us.archive.org/23/items/waq61121/61121.pdf> (last accessed 15 July 2014); Jansen, *Neglected Duty*, 3-5, 55-62; Scott, 'An "official" Islamic response', 50-5; Hassan, 'Modern Interpretations', 359.

³⁴ Such is the argument of Simon Wolfgang Fuchs, 'Do Excellent Surgeons Make Miserable Exegetes? Negotiating the Sunni Tradition in the *ḡihādī* Camps', *Die Welt des Islams* 53.2 (2013), 192-237, which is derived from the author's book, *Proper Signposts for the Camp: The Reception of Classical Authorities in the ḡihādī Manual al-'Umda fī I'dād al-'Udda* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2011). References will be to the 2013 article.

³⁵ 'Abd al-Qādir b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (a.k.a. Dr Faḍl), *Al-'Umda fī i'dād al-'udda li-l-jihād fī sabīl Allāh* (Word document), available at www.tawhed.ws/dl/?i=f8ro5d45 (last accessed 10 July 2014), (pagination may vary on different computers). For biographical information on Dr Faḍl, see Nelly Lahoud, 'Jihādī recantations and their significance: The case of Dr Faḍl', in *Fault Lines in Global Jihad: Organizational, Strategic, and Ideological Fissures*, ed. Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman (London: Routledge, 2011), 138-57 (139-40). Writing from an Egyptian prison in 2007 and following, Dr Faḍl polemicized against the jihad activities of al-Qā'ida, but Lahoud doubts the sincerity of these writings. For a thorough account of the history of al-Qā'ida, especially in relation to Saudi Arabia, see Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*.

most frequently cited medieval source in the book, many other prominent and respected authorities such as al-Māwardī (d. 1058), al-Nawawī (d. 1277), and Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 1449) are also used. Dr Faḍl allows that contemporary Muslim rulers may be assimilated to the Mongols in order to be declared apostates. However, he explains that this point may be made without reference to Ibn Taymiyya, and he does not rely on the anti-Mongol fatwas in the fashion of Faraj to build his overall case. Dr Faḍl does quote the first anti-Mongol fatwa, which was not used by Faraj, where Ibn Taymiyya discusses weighing up the pros and cons of fighting. Even if the intentions of the fighters are impure, it is obligatory to fight to protect religion if the danger to religion from not fighting is greater than that from fighting.³⁶ Osama bin Laden (d. 2011), former leader of al-Qā‘ida, invokes Ibn Taymiyya and his utilitarian rationale to the same ends in his 1996 Declaration of War against the USA and its allies. According to Bin Laden, it is an Islamic principle to repel the greater of two dangers at the expense of the lesser, and it is better for the unrighteous to fight alongside the righteous against the enemies of religion than to forgo fighting altogether.³⁷

Utilitarian reasoning of this kind can also run in the opposite direction. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī in his large 2009 book *Fiqh al-jihād* briefly mentions Ibn Taymiyya’s anti-Mongol writing and the book *Al-Farīda al-ghā‘iba* in the midst of a lengthy juristic treatment on rising up against ruling regimes. Against the extremists, al-Qaraḍāwī notes that fighting those who violate religion is the prerogative of the ruler himself, not the populace, and this is to avert anarchy.³⁸ More broadly, al-Qaraḍāwī invokes the traditional juristic bias toward social and political stability.³⁹ He asserts that it is impermissible to remove a wrong or harm by force when that would lead to even greater wrong or harm, and he sets out four conditions that must be met before forcefully confronting wrong (*munkar*): Muslim scholars must have come to a consensus that the alleged wrong is in fact a wrong; the wrong must be manifest and open, not hidden; one must possess sufficient strength to correct the wrong; and correcting the wrong by force must not entail a greater wrong such as anarchy. Implied throughout is that the jihadist agenda fails to meet these conditions.⁴⁰ According to al-

³⁶ Fuchs, ‘Excellent Surgeons’, 203-4, 217-9, 233, 237; Dr Faḍl, *Al-‘Umda*, 70-1, 381-2, twice quotes the last three pages of Ibn Taymiyya’s first anti-Mongol fatwa, MF 28:506-8.

³⁷ See the English translation, ‘Bin Laden’s Fatwa’, available at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/military-july-dec96-fatwa_1996/ (last accessed 14 July 2014); the passage begins, ‘The ultimate aim of pleasing Allah...’ I was unable to locate an Arabic version of the text. For analysis of the fatwa, see Rosalind W. Gwynne, ‘Usama Bin Ladin, the Qur’an and Jihad’, *Religion* 36 (2006): 61–90.

³⁸ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-jihād: Dirāsa muqārana li-ahkāmihī wa falsafatihī fī daw’ al-Qur’ān wa al-Sunna*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Madanī, n.d.; also, Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 2009), 2:1032.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 1033.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 1040-51.

Qaraḍāwī, patience is commended in the face of oppressive rulers since history shows that armed rebellions never succeed but lead only to bloodshed and chaos.⁴¹ Al-Qaraḍāwī limits the means of change to democracy and other peaceful approaches.⁴² Yahya Michot's response to jihadist use of Ibn Taymiyya's anti-Mongol fatwas is more philological, historical, and theological and less juristic than al-Qaraḍāwī's, but the vision of prudence and pragmatism is much the same. It is to Michot that we now turn.

Michot on Ibn Taymiyya's anti-Mongol fatwas

Yahya Michot spent his early career through 1997 at the Catholic University of Louvain where he established his reputation as a leading authority on Ibn Sīnā. He was then based at the University of Oxford, Faculty of Theology and the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies for ten years before taking up his present professorship at Hartford Seminary in the USA in 2008. Michot's earlier scholarship is in his native French, and he continues to write in that language, although by now a substantial portion of his work appears in English or English translation. Michot started translating and commenting on Ibn Taymiyya in 1990, and he has continued strong ever since, establishing himself as the closest reader of Ibn Taymiyya in western academia. Michot brings a high degree of philological skill and historical learning to his scholarship. A substantial number of his publications are philological and historical in the first instance and do not bear a normative religious stamp. The rest of his work is equally well informed by philological and historical rigor but adds as well the explicitly moral and theological voice of a Muslim religious scholar. Much of this latter body of scholarship consists of translated Taymiyyan texts with full scholarly apparatuses accompanied by historical, linguistic, moral and theological commentary, usually in the footnotes and introductory sections. The core of Michot's strategy for interpreting Ibn Taymiyya is translating and contextualizing selected texts in ways that highlight the tolerant and pragmatic aspects of his ethics and spirituality. In addition to more than twenty five books and academic articles on Ibn Taymiyya, Michot has published three series of short selections from Ibn

⁴¹ Ibid. 1054-5.

⁴² Ibid. 1067.

Taymiyya's writings in French translation.⁴³ Sixteen of these texts and two of Michot's smaller translation volumes are rendered into English in his 2012 book *Against Extremisms*.⁴⁴

The challenge posed by Ibn Taymiyya's anti-Mongol activism and its appropriation by the likes of 'Abd al-Salām Faraj appears to have been at the forefront of Michot's mind in 1990 when he initiated the first of his three translation series. In the opening paragraph of the first installment of 'Textes spirituels' published in the Parisian magazine *Le Musulman*, Michot writes:

The oeuvre of Ibn Taymiyya (661/1263 – 728/1328) is in some ways a victim of his gigantism and his militancy. Outside academic works, the readings that it has been given too often suffer from ignorance of the essential texts or degenerate into ideological reductions. Preserving a rare relevance in a time where Islam is confronted with a neo-*jāhiliyya* having perhaps more severe consequences, over the long term, than the Mongol tidal wave against which the great Ḥanbalī scholar fought, this oeuvre however should deserve a better fate. Not being able to undertake at this stage a systematic presentation of the spirituality that animates it, we propose instead to translate into French some particularly rich pages for *Le Musulman* to be able to nourish still the faith and reflection of today's believers.⁴⁵

In Michot's assessment contemporary Muslims face the threat of a 'neo-*jāhiliyya*'—presumably the bane of extremism—worse than that of the Mongol hordes invading Syria, and Ibn Taymiyya, rather than being the source of today's problems, is in fact part of the solution. Thus, Michot seeks to nurture a reflective and sophisticated faith among francophone Muslims by translating Ibn Taymiyya's texts into French. Michot does not here specify the core content of Ibn Taymiyya's spirituality, but in the course of his translation work in 'Textes spirituels' and beyond, it becomes clear that it consists in sincere obedience, moderation, and prudent pragmatism in following the way of the Prophet.

⁴³ 'Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya', *Le Musulman* (Paris, 1990-8); 'Pages spirituelles d'Ibn Taymiyya', *Action* (Mauritius 1999-2002); and 'Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya. Nouvelle série' (2009-present), available at <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/it/> (last accessed 15 July 2014); the first two series are available on the same website.

⁴⁴ Michot's curriculum vita with publications through 2008 is available at http://www.hartsem.edu/sites/default/files/Michot_CV.pdf (last accessed 15 July 2014), and further works are listed in his *Against Extremisms*, 279-83.

⁴⁵ Yahya Michot, 'Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya. I. L'extinction (fanâ)', *Le Musulman* (Paris), 11 (June-Sept. 1990), 6-9, 29 (6).

For the most part, the sixteen installments of ‘Textes spirituels’ published between 1990 and 1998 examine basics of Ibn Taymiyya’s vision of God’s moral economy with humankind, including correct worship of God, rightly ordered love for God, and the relation between revelation and reason. However, Michot breaks with these themes in contributions XI—XIII published in 1994 and 1995 to examine Ibn Taymiyya’s anti-Mongol activism. As far as I am aware, this is the first time that Michot took up the question of Ibn Taymiyya’s anti-Mongol fatwas directly. The immediate backdrop is the violent conflict in Algeria that erupted after the military cancelled parliamentary elections in January 1992 to preclude a victory by the Islamist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).⁴⁶ Michot has this in view as he translates ‘particularly “hot”’ portions of Ibn Taymiyya’s second anti-Mongol fatwa, provides it with extensive annotation, and discusses its historical and contemporary significance in an introduction. He also translates a passage quoting Ibn Taymiyya from the Algerian Islamist Ali Belhadj, FIS second in command.⁴⁷

Michot’s introduction to these three installments of ‘Textes spirituels’ briefly outlines the Mongol invasions of Syria in the early 1300s and seeks to limit the significance of Ibn Taymiyya’s anti-Mongol activism to his own historical context of the Mamluk sultanate by casting him as a mere propagandist. Just as Mongol propagandists attributed Mongol military successes to the will of God, Ibn Taymiyya was himself a propagandist for the Mamlūks, and his opposition to the Mongols was driven as much by pro-Mamlūk patriotism and Arab anti-Turkish and anti-Persian sentiment as by the Mongols’ defective Islam. Michot adds that the course of events vindicated the Mongol apologists because the Mongols eventually converted to Sunnī Islam after flirting with Shi‘ism, and their conquests contributed to deeper penetration of Islam into Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

Michot then asks his Muslim readers how they should respond to all of this. Michot notes that ‘Abd al-Salām Faraj’s *Farīda* cited the Taymiyyan texts translated in this installment of ‘Textes spirituels’ to justify jihad against Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Likewise, Michot explains, Ali Belhadj used these texts in 1992 to call for armed insurrection against the Algerian government. Michot continues that both Faraj and Belhadj ‘Mongolize’ the governments of their own countries. That is, they turn Ibn Taymiyya’s call to resist a foreign invader into a call to overthrow their own governments. Michot observes further that

⁴⁶ For a recent account of the Algerian conflict, see James D. Le Sueur, *Between Terror and Democracy: Algeria since 1989* (London: Zed Books, 2010).

⁴⁷ Yahya M. Michot, ‘Textes spirituels d’Ibn Taymiyya. XI. Mongols et Mamlūks: l’état du monde musulman vers 709/1310’, *Le Musulman* (Paris), 24 (Oct. 1994), 26-31 (quoted text on p. 28); idem, ‘Textes spirituels...XII’, 25-30; idem, ‘Textes spirituels...XIII’, 25-30.

the Taymiyyan texts in question have been subject to completely opposing interpretations. On the one hand, for the radicals, ‘the Mongols today are no longer outside the Muslim city; they are in its very heart’, and Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwas justify fighting them. But on the other hand, for the Muslim religious establishment, the Taymiyyan texts provide no religious or historical foundation for such opposition whatsoever. Michot himself does not take a stand for one side or the other, indicating that he wishes to avert misunderstanding and leave open the possibility of bringing other considerations to bear on the matter. At this point, Michot refers his readers to the earlier translation articles in the ‘Textes spirituels’ series, works that deal with Ibn Taymiyya’s views on worship and love of God. Presumably, Michot wishes to signal to his readers that the interpretations of both the radicals and the religious establishment are incomplete in their understanding of Ibn Taymiyya and lack sufficient spiritual depth.⁴⁸

Apart from indicating that Ibn Taymiyya’s opposition to the Mongols was not prudent in light of the good that they ultimately achieved for Islam, Michot’s questioning of contemporary Mongolizers in installments XI—XIII of ‘Textes spirituels’ is not particularly robust. This changes in Michot’s 2004 book in French on the Mardin fatwa, which was translated into English and published in 2006 as *Muslims under non-Muslim Rule*.⁴⁹ Michot now argues clearly that ‘to use the writings of Ibn Taymiyya to “Mongolize” the governments of certain present-day Muslim countries is indeed to betray his thought’.⁵⁰ This is because Ibn Taymiyya adopted a religiously-based quietist stance toward his own Mamlūk rulers. Michot explains that Ibn Taymiyya never called for armed insurrection against the Mamlūks. Instead, he enjoined patience in the face of oppression, and he commanded obedience to rulers wherever possible.

To clarify this position, Michot quotes three fundamentals that Ibn Taymiyya outlines on allegiance to the ruling authorities: ‘to obey within obedience to God, even if the one giving the order is unjust; to abstain from disputing the authority of those who dispose it; to take up the cause of the Truth without fear of any creature’.⁵¹ Taking up ‘the cause of the Truth without fear of any creature’ provides Ibn Taymiyya room for his stubborn adherence

⁴⁸ Michot, ‘Textes spirituels...XI’, 27-8.

⁴⁹ Yahya Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya: Mardin: Hégire, fuite du péché et «demeure de l’Islam»* (Beirut: Dar Al-Bouraq, 1425/2004); idem, *Ibn Taymiyya: Muslims Under Non-Muslim Rule* (Oxford: Interface Publications, 1427/2006); all references will be to the English volume.

⁵⁰ Michot, *Muslims*, 49.

⁵¹ Ibn Taymiyya, MF 3:250; trans. Michot, *Muslims*, 54.

to his own religious convictions, some of which famously landed him in Mamlūk prisons.⁵² For Michot, Ibn Taymiyya's 'critical obedience' and 'non-violent quietism' are rooted either in strict adherence to the way of the Prophet or in a pragmatic morality that always favors the lesser evil—insurrection being a cause of greater evil than good—or most likely in both.⁵³ In Michot's eyes, this quietism grounded in religious conviction precludes any analogical transfer of Ibn Taymiyya's rulings on the Mongols, an external enemy, to one's own government.⁵⁴ Later in *Muslims under non-Muslim Rule*, Michot drives home his disagreement with both modern radicals and western scholars of Islam who follow them in imagining Ibn Taymiyya to legitimize Mongolizing Muslim rulers. Moreover, Michot wonders whether western scholars nefariously adhere to this reading of Ibn Taymiyya in order to confirm that Islam is incompatible with modern and western values.⁵⁵

The question of 'Mongolizing' Islam is fundamentally about Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of *jus ad bellum*, that is, what justifies war and armed rebellion. 'Abd al-Salām Faraj and jihadists who follow his lead justify rebellion against their own rulers by assimilating them to the Mongols whom Ibn Taymiyya deemed apostates for failing to uphold Islamic law. Michot rejects the Mongolizing reading out of hand as unfaithful to Ibn Taymiyya's intention because his anti-Mongol fatwas were nothing more than Mamlūk war propaganda against a foreign invader and his political theology precluded insurrection against his own ruler.

Michot on the Mardin fatwa

We turn now to the second issue that Michot confronts: what makes for a domain of peace and a domain of war in Ibn Taymiyya's vision of the world? This is the issue at the core of Michot's 2006 book *Muslims under non-Muslim Rule*, and here Michot argues that modern Islamists are unfaithful to Ibn Taymiyya in attributing to him a political vision of Islam concerned with the apparatus of the modern state and the imposition of Islamic law

⁵² Hasan Qasim Murad, 'Ibn Taymiyya on Trial: A Narrative Account of His Miḥan', *Islamic Studies* 18 (1979): 1–32.

⁵³ Yahya M. Michot, 'Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya. Nouvelle série. IV. L'obéissance aux autorités', (Dec. 2009), available at <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/it/works/ITA-TextSpi-NS04.pdf> (last accessed 30 January 2014), gives Ibn Taymiyya's political quietism a firmer evidential base than that found in *Muslims under non-Muslim Rule* by translating relevant passages from the his *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya*, a refutation of Shī'ism written sometime toward 1317. Here Ibn Taymiyya explains that, contrary to the views of the Khārijīs, Zaydīs and Mu'tazilīs, armed insurrection against an unjust ruler always entails excessive corruption to the community and is also prohibited by the Prophet. Rulers should also be obeyed in whatever agrees with God's command, even if they are themselves sinners. The texts are also translated into English in Michot, *Against Extremisms*, 220-30. Later in *Against Extremisms*, 259 n. 2, Michot calls Ibn Taymiyya's stance 'critical loyalism'.

⁵⁴ Michot, *Muslims*, 49-56.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 123-9.

therein. Rather, Michot argues, Ibn Taymiyya is most concerned with the religious and ethical integrity of Muslims as individual persons.

Michot's book is a study in the interpretation and contemporary use of Ibn Taymiyya's short Mardin fatwa. The date of the fatwa is not known, but the city of Mardin, today in southern Turkey, was under Mongol Īlkhān rule. Ibn Taymiyya's fatwa addresses the legal status of the city and its Muslim inhabitants: was Mardin a domain of war, and did Muslims have an obligation to emigrate from it to the lands of Islam? Ibn Taymiyya responds that emigration (*hijra*) is not obligatory if Muslims can still practise their religion and that Mardin is neither a domain of war (*dār al-ḥarb*) nor a domain of peace (*dār al-silm*); rather its status is a composite (*murakkab*) of the two. Ibn Taymiyya further defines a domain of war as a place 'whose inhabitants are unbelievers' and a domain of peace as a domain 'in which the institutions (*aḥkām*) of Islam are implemented because its army (*jund*) is [composed] of Muslims'.⁵⁶

As Michot explains in *Muslims under non-Muslim Rule*, 'Abd al-Salām Faraj and other modern militant Islamists such as the Palestinian jihadist 'Abd Allāh 'Azzām (d. 1989) equate the Mardin fatwa's 'institutions (*aḥkām*) of Islam' found in Ibn Taymiyya's 'domain of peace' with Islamic government and the legislation and institutions of the modern state. On this reading, a 'domain of peace' is a place where Islamic law, understood as a legal system enforced by the state, is applied. Conversely, a 'domain of war' is a place where a legal system informed by unbelief is in force even though, for Faraj at least, it is occupied by a majority of Muslims. This interpretation allows Faraj to consider the Egypt of his time a domain of war. As Michot correctly points out, Faraj misunderstands Ibn Taymiyya to say that Mardin is a domain of war despite being inhabited by Muslims. For Ibn Taymiyya, a domain of war is in fact defined by the absence of Muslims.⁵⁷

Michot rejects the Islamist reading of Ibn Taymiyya's Mardin fatwa as 'politicizing', but, before coming to that critique, he sets the foundation for an alternative interpretation. Following what he calls an 'intertextual' method, he first seeks to enrich the interpretation of the Mardin fatwa by translating three additional Taymiyyan texts dealing with emigration (*hijra*). Here Michot finds that true emigration is most fundamentally about fleeing from sin, not just leaving a place. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya speaks of two kinds of emigration: one

⁵⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, MF 28:240-241; idem, KMF 4:279-280; English trans. Michot, *Muslims*, 63-65 (quoting Michot's translation, 65).

⁵⁷ Michot, *Muslims*, 38-45 (discussion), 101-122 (translated texts), 103-4 n. 2 (Faraj's misunderstanding). See also Jansen, *Neglected Duty*, 158-9, 169-70 (§20, 37).

fleeing from sin and bad company, and the other shunning evil-doers in order to inflict a penalty on them. In both cases, Michot explains, Ibn Taymiyya counsels a prudent pragmatism in emigration. Emigration should be undertaken only if the good in it outweighs the harm. One should not, for example, turn away from sinners to punish them with a severity that leads to greater harm than the sins that they commit. Similarly, fleeing from sinners to avoid their evil runs the risk of abandoning the good that one might gain from them. This is exemplified in one of the texts that Michot translates. Ibn Taymiyya explains that the famous hadith scholar Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 855) did not completely shun his theological opponents the Qadarīs because there was no one strong enough to fight them. Moreover, fighting them would have cut him off from the knowledge that they transmitted through hadith reports.⁵⁸

Michot draws three conclusions from Ibn Taymiyya's texts on emigration. First, Ibn Taymiyya provides no set answers for Muslims living in western countries today who wonder whether they should emigrate to places more supportive of their Muslim identities. Rather, individual Muslims must weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of their own circumstances. Second, Ibn Taymiyya's approach to emigration is ethical, not political; there is no mention of Islamic government. Third, Michot calls Ibn Taymiyya 'a theologian of moderation' for his 'profound utilitarianism' in moral and religious matters and his avoidance of excessive risk and intolerance.⁵⁹

With this moderate, personalist, and utilitarian doctrine of emigration in view, Michot moves on in *Muslims under non-Muslim Rule* to what Ibn Taymiyya means in the Mardin fatwa by the terms 'domain of peace' and 'domain of war'. For Ibn Taymiyya, Michot explains, the status of a place depends on the quality of the people residing in it. It is the presence of unbelievers that defines a domain of war, and it is the presence of Muslims freely practising their faith that defines a domain of peace. Michot emphasizes that this approach to the domains of war and peace is 'both personalist and religious, or ethical', but not 'political in the narrow sense'.⁶⁰ Mardin was then, for Ibn Taymiyya, a 'composite' domain, inhabited as it was by both unbelievers and Muslims, and the Muslims could stay if they were able to practise their religion unimpeded. As noted above, Michot takes it to be a matter of personal and individual assessment as to whether a particular 'composite' domain provides sufficient freedom for religious practice.

⁵⁸ Michot, *Muslims*, 11-17 (discussion), 66-100 (translated texts).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 17-20 (20)

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 20-3 (23).

We turn now to the Islamist understanding of Ibn Taymiyya's domain of peace, which poses the primary challenge for Michot's interpretation. For 'Abd al-Salām Faraj and like-minded Islamists, Ibn Taymiyya's mention of 'the institutions (*aḥkām*) of Islam' refers to Islamic government and a state legal system. The status of a place depends on the character of the laws that the territorial state enforces, not on the ethical and religious condition of its residents. Michot strongly resists this 'politicizing' of Ibn Taymiyya. Again using his intertextual method, he ascertains that by 'institutions of Islam', Ibn Taymiyya intends not Islamic governance but personal matters pertaining to marriage, inheritance, burial, security and protection of property, matters that are up to individual Muslims to implement. A domain where Muslims have the ability to practise these 'institutions' is not a domain of war even if ruled by non-Muslims. Ibn Taymiyya's primary concern is the well-being and flourishing of Muslim people, not Muslim territorial dominance and the territorial imposition of Islamic law.⁶¹ Michot concludes, 'The thinking of Ibn Taymiyya is of an essentially juridical-religious nature, and personalist. To that is added a concern that is in truth far less political than it is security-oriented, even humanitarian'.⁶²

Ibn Taymiyya's definition of a 'domain of peace' poses one further difficulty for Michot's personalist interpretation. A 'domain of peace' is not only where the 'institutions of Islam are implemented' but also where this is so 'because its army is composed of Muslims'. The added condition of a Muslim army could be construed as political, but Michot thinks not. On Michot's reading, Ibn Taymiyya's foregrounding of the military pushes out civil authorities, as well as politics and the state in the modern senses of the words. His definition of a domain of peace simply reflects the realities of his experience in the Mamlūk sultanate. If it were to legitimize anything modern, Michot suggests, it would be contemporary (pre-Arab spring) military regimes in the Middle East, not the Islamic state envisioned by Islamists.⁶³

At the very end of the Mardin fatwa, Ibn Taymiyya specifies what it means for Mardin to be a composite between a domain of peace 'in which the institutions of Islam are implemented because its army is [composed of] Muslims' and a domain of war 'whose inhabitants are unbelievers'. This third type of domain is, following the Arabic text in *Majmū' fatāwā*, one 'in which the Muslim shall be treated (*yu'āmal*) as he merits, and in which the one who departs from the Way/Law of Islam (*sharī'at al-Islām*) shall be combated

⁶¹ Ibid. 19-20 n. 2, 23, 25.

⁶² Ibid. 26.

⁶³ Ibid. 23, 59-61.

(*yuqātal*) as he merits'.⁶⁴ Michot takes this as further evidence for Ibn Taymiyya's personalist rather than systemic or political approach to the question of Mardin's status. The focus is no longer on the status of the city as a whole, but rather on the individuals therein, who are to be treated according to what they each deserve.⁶⁵ However, Michot does not reflect on what it might mean that someone who departs from the Way of Islam should be 'combated' or 'fought' (*yuqātal*). Thanks to a textual emendation arising out of a conference on the Mardin fatwa held in 2010, Michot no longer faces this question.

Michot on the 2010 Mardin conference

In 2011 Michot published an article in *The Muslim World*, of which he is the editor, providing a thorough account of a conference held in Mardin on 27-28 March 2010 to discuss Ibn Taymiyya's fatwa.⁶⁶ The conference was initiated by organizations linked to the prominent Mauritanian shaykh 'Abd Allāh bin Bayyah and British-based writer Aftab Malik, and it brought together a diverse array of scholars to undo alleged misuse of the Mardin fatwa. Michot himself was not invited. Michot observes that the conference declaration⁶⁷ echoes much that he says in *Muslims under non-Muslim Rule*. Nonetheless, he sharply criticizes the New Mardin initiative for shoddy scholarship and promoting a sugar-coated 'Genetically Modified Islam' that only feeds the cancer of Islamist extremism.

Michot points to the first conclusion of the Mardin declaration as the prime example of misguided scholarship. This states that Ibn Taymiyya's Mardin fatwa may not be used to justify rebelling against rulers and declaring fellow Muslims unbelievers. The problem is that contemporary jihadists justify acts of violence not from the Mardin fatwa but from Ibn Taymiyya's anti-Mongol fatwas and other sources. Michot shows from this and various statements given to the press that conference representatives obviously confused the Mardin fatwa with Ibn Taymiyya's anti-Mongol fatwas such that the full weight of responsibility for modern Muslim terrorism was loaded erroneously onto the Mardin fatwa.⁶⁸

Michot also reproaches Bin Bayyah and his American student Hamza Yusuf Hanson for making exorbitant claims about the import of a correction to the printed Arabic of the

⁶⁴ Translation adapted from Michot, *Muslims*, 65, with reference to the Arabic of the Mardin fatwa in MF 28:240-241.

⁶⁵ Michot, *Muslims*, 26-27.

⁶⁶ Yahya Michot, 'Ibn Taymiyya's "New Mardin Fatwa." Is Genetically Modified Islam (GMI) Carcinogenic?' *The Muslim World* 101.2 (2011):130-81.

⁶⁷ 'The New Mardin Declaration', 28 March 2010, available at http://www.mardin-fatwa.com/attach/Mardin_Declaration_English.pdf (last accessed 25 September 2013).

⁶⁸ Michot, 'New Mardin', 137-8, 139-141, 143-4, 148-9.

Mardin fatwa. In an interview on Aljazeera television, Bin Bayyah notes that some Muslim youth in Europe carried out an attack on the basis of Michot's translation of *yuqāṭal* in the last line of the Mardin fatwa as 'combated'. Bin Bayyah does not censure Michot himself: Michot was only translating the text he had at hand. Michot expresses appreciation for Bin Bayyah's charity, but challenges Bin Bayyah to produce evidence of a link between his translation and Islamist terrorism in Europe, especially as the whole tenor of *Muslims under non-Muslim Rule* opposes such a reading.⁶⁹ Bin Bayyah continues that the general sense of the Mardin fatwa requires replacing *yuqāṭal* (combated) in the last line with *yu'āmal* (treated), and he refers to early sources to support his emendation. Michot accepts this emendation to the modern printing of the Mardin fatwa found in *Majmū' al-fatāwā*, and he finds further support for it in a manuscript dating back to 1372 CE. The last line of the fatwa thus defines the third type of domain as one 'in which the Muslim shall be treated (*yu'āmal*) as he merits, and in which the one who departs from the Way/Law of Islam shall be treated (*yu'āmal*) as he merits'. Michot readily accepts Bin Bayyah's emendation of the text, but he does not think that it drastically changes the meaning. However, Bin Bayyah and later Hamza Yusuf claim that contemporary Islamist extremism, including the terrorism of al-Qā'ida, is all based on this fatwa misprint and that its correction has now pulled the rug out from under extremist ideology. Michot rejects this as preposterous grandstanding, especially as he has been unable to locate any mention of the Mardin fatwa in the writings of Osama bin Laden.⁷⁰

Michot concludes that the pronouncements coming out of the Mardin conference deliberations were of such inferior academic quality that few would be persuaded by them, and he dismisses the Mardin declaration as little more than a publicity stunt that made a mockery of those involved and totally undermined their objective of opposing Islamist extremism. Michot further links the Mardin conference to the post 9/11 'industry' of refurbishing the tarnished image of Islam and promoting what he calls a soft and irenic Sufism and 'Genetically Modified Islam' designed to fight the spiritual cancer of Islamist terrorism. To Michot's mind this Genetically Modified Islam promotes a kind of 'spiritual diabetes' that does not cure the 'spiritual cancer' of Islamist extremism but instead exacerbates it. Michot then examines the responses of the American jihadists Anwar al-

⁶⁹ Ibid. 138-9.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 138-9, 144-51. For Hamza Yusuf's account, see the video, 'The Mardin Fatwa & Al Qaeda', available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77QODDURVMg> (last accessed 15 July 2014). Curiously, Faraj transcribes the relevant text from the Mardin fatwa in *al-Farīda al-ghā'iba* in one place *yu'āmal* and in a second place *yuqāṭal*. See the text in Jansen, *The Neglected Duty*, 7 (Arabic §20 *yu'āmal*) and 14 (Arabic §36 *yuqāṭal*). Even more curiously, Jansen translates both occurrences as 'treated' (pp. 159 and 169). I am grateful to Jabir Sani Maihula for drawing the second occurrence to my attention.

Awlaki (d. 2011) and Adam Gadahn to the 2010 Mardin conference to show that its extreme impotence in fact emboldened their Islamist extremism. Michot concludes colourfully, ‘Among American Muslims as in the Middle East, hyperglycemia is carcinogenic’.⁷¹

Michot on the Arab Spring and Islamic Revolution

The Arab Spring afforded Michot opportunity to explore the import of Taymiyyan political theology further, especially in two essays published online in February and March 2011. The first interprets the Egyptian uprising as an ‘Islamic Revolution’, and the second probes the legitimacy of Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī’s call to kill the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi (d. 2011).⁷²

In the first essay, and in a similar and in parts identical discussion found in his 2012 book *Against Extremisms*, Michot outlines his religious argument against ‘Mongolizing’ Islam even more fully than before.⁷³ These discussions not only elaborate Michot’s critique of how contemporary jihadists and western academics read Ibn Taymiyya. They also go on to explain how the 2011 Egyptian uprising, as a nonviolent protest movement, was a specifically Islamic revolution. After reviewing how Ibn Taymiyya’s rationale for fighting the Mongol invaders has been appropriated by modern Islamic radicals and western observers, Michot condemns this appropriation in no uncertain terms:

To legitimize armed struggle and the assassination of Muslim rulers by identifying them with the invaders attacked in the anti-Mongol fatwas of Ibn Taymiyya is indeed, quite simply, a hijacking of the text that transforms his writings calling to resist an incoming foreign invader into pamphlets challenging a power in situ. It is shocking that such a ‘Mongolization’ of Sadat and other Muslim rulers could be conceived as faithful to the thought of the Damascene Shaykh al-Islam [Ibn Taymiyya]. He himself indeed remained always loyal vis-à-vis his own sultan, the Mamluk al-Nasir Muḥammad—even though the latter was, in respect of the Shari‘a, not much stricter than a Mongol of that time or a modern Arab-Muslim ruler.... The writings of the Damascene shaykh are, moreover, explicit: for him, as for the great majority of

⁷¹ Michot, ‘New Mardin’, 155-63 (quote on p. 163).

⁷² Yahya Michot, ‘An Islamic Revolution’, 18 February 2011, available at www.scribd.com/doc/65025050/An-Islamic-Revolution (last accessed 23 September 2013); and idem, ‘The fatwa of Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī against Gaddafi’, 15 March 2011, available at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/51219918/The-fatwa-of-Shaykh-Yusuf-al-Qaradawi-against-Gaddafi> (last accessed 6 July 2014).

⁷³ Michot, *Against Extremisms*, xxv-xxix.

classical Sunni authors, such a loyalty is the very foundation of the political theology of Islam.⁷⁴

On Michot's reading, Ibn Taymiyya was religiously committed to loyalty to his own rulers in accord with classical Sunnī political theory, and this trumped the rationale that he devised to justify fighting the Mongols. Ibn Taymiyya's quietism is not grounded in a judgment about the piety of the Mamlūks, nor the degree of their adherence to Islamic laws after the fashion of his ruling against the Mongols. Instead, it is rooted in the traditional Sunnī conviction that armed insurrection against one's own ruler always entails more corruption than it prevents, as encapsulated in the maxim that Ibn Taymiyya occasionally cites, 'Sixty years of an unjust ruler are better than a single night without a ruler'.⁷⁵ Additionally, Michot explains, patience is the virtue that Ibn Taymiyya prescribes in the face of mistreatment and injustice at the hands of ruling authorities, and this can, in fact, be a means by which God tests his people.⁷⁶

Turning to the Egyptian uprising, Michot clarifies that submission to rulers does not require total passivity in the face of injustice. Rather, 'there is room in Islam...for conscientious objection, non-violent protest, and civil disobedience enlightened by faith'; these are in fact at times 'obligations of the religion, in the same way as are moderation and weighing the pros and cons in all things'.⁷⁷ In Islam and in Ibn Taymiyya's thinking, there is a place for 'speaking truth to power' and patiently enduring the consequences, or for what Michot calls 'the Muslim tradition of critical patience and of the *jihad* of the word'.⁷⁸ It is within this tradition that Michot locates the Egyptian Tahrir Square demonstrators of early 2011 and calls their non-violent stand for truth and justice 'a truly *Islamic* revolution'.⁷⁹

Michot does not explain how the critical but loyal patience of Ibn Taymiyya provides a precedent for calling on a ruler such as former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to leave office entirely, not merely to change his ways. Yet, Michot finds in the Egyptian uprising a modern expression of Islamic activism that he believes to be far more faithful to the Taymiyyan spirit than 'the violent Ibn Taymiyya of the assassins of Sadat', who 'was nothing

⁷⁴ Michot, 'An Islamic Revolution', 2; almost exactly the same text is found in Michot, *Against Extremisms*, xxvi.

⁷⁵ See for example Ibn Taymiyya, MF 20:54, translated with slight differences in Michot, *Against Extremisms*, 258-9. Other occurrences of the maxim include Ibn Taymiyya, MF 14:268 and 30:136.

⁷⁶ Michot, 'An Islamic Revolution', 2.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 3; nearly identical wordings of the quotations in this and the following two references are found in Michot, *Against Extremisms*, xxvii-xxviii.

⁷⁸ Michot, 'An Islamic Revolution', 4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

but a vicious fairy-tale, a Mongolizing bad dream'.⁸⁰ Put differently, for Michot, the example of Ibn Taymiyya adds greater legitimacy to non-violent revolution than to violent insurrection, and there apparently does come a point in a Taymiyyan political theology when a ruler may be called upon to leave office if preponderant benefit is in view.

Michot's second essay, dated 15 March 2011, seeks to make sense of Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī's calls on 21 and 25 February 2011 to kill Libyan ruler Muammar Gaddafi, an act that would appear out of step with Taymiyyan critical loyalty to rulers, not to mention al-Qaradāwī's own juristic principles. While there were medieval jurists who permitted rebellion in self-defense and rebellion that had a reasonable chance of success without causing preponderant harm,⁸¹ neither Michot nor al-Qaradāwī invokes these precedents. Al-Qaradāwī does, however, justify his fatwa on the grounds that Gaddafi was a great danger to the Libyan people. He had already massacred many of his own people, and he needed to be prevented from wreaking the further havoc that he threatened. Thus, based on a 'jurisprudence of balancing (*muwāzanât*)', Gaddafi should be sacrificed for the greater good of all.⁸²

Analyzing this, Michot underlines al-Qaradāwī's role as a charismatic religious authority independent of state institutions and without coercive power to depose Gaddafi himself. Al-Qaradāwī speaks for Islam only insofar as ordinary Muslims give him their ear. Thus, Michot writes, 'By calling for the killing of Gaddafi, Shaykh al-Qaradāwī didn't in fact do anything other than fill his obligations as a renowned mufti and meet the expectations of a great number of believers.'⁸³ Additionally, Michot seeks to forestall a comparison of al-Qaradāwī's ruling with the *Farīda* of 'Abd al-Salām Faraj and the assassination of Egyptian President Sadat by noting two points. The first concerns scholarly authority. The respected al-Qaradāwī has better scholarly credentials than did the electrician Faraj, who had a poor understanding of the texts that he used. The learned al-Qaradāwī's legal reasoning is based on a careful weighing of benefits and harms in accord with traditional jurisprudence. Michot's second point is that Gaddafi was the aggressor and not the people. With Gaddafi, it was a matter of the ruler losing his legitimacy by turning on his people to massacre them, not the

⁸⁰ Michot, *Against Extremisms*, xxix.

⁸¹ Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 194, 283-7.

⁸² Michot, 'The fatwa of Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī', 2-3. David H. Warren, 'The 'Ulamā' and the Arab Uprisings 2011-13: Considering Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, the "Global Mufti," between the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic Legal Tradition, and Qatari Foreign Policy', *New Middle Eastern Studies* 4 (2014), available at <http://www.brismes.ac.uk/nmes/archives/1305> (last accessed 16 July 2014), includes discussion of al-Qaradāwī's fatwa against Gaddafi and provides an assessment of the bases of his religious authority.

⁸³ Michot, 'The fatwa of Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī', 3.

people rising up in arms against the ruler. Or, as Michot puts it, it is not an ‘armed coming out against the sultan’ (*khurūj ‘alā al-sultān*) but an ‘armed coming out of the power against its own people’ (*khurūj al-sultān ‘alā al-sha‘b*). In such cases it is the responsibility of religious scholars to call for the death of the perpetrator, and, as al-Qaraḍāwī argued, it is appropriate to sacrifice one person for the sake of the people. Michot acknowledges that al-Qaraḍāwī’s ruling entails a certain danger in that it could be misapplied to other circumstances. The antidote in his view is to recall that fatwas apply only to the particular situations for which they were given; they cannot be generalized into universal rules of religion.⁸⁴

Michot does not mention explicitly that al-Qaraḍāwī also does not justify killing Gaddafi by denigrating his religious status. There is no charge here of apostasy. Al-Qaraḍāwī’s reasoning is based solely on the pragmatic consideration of inflicting a harm—killing Gaddafi—in order to achieve the greater good of saving the Libyan people from slaughter. This calculation would appear to counter al-Qaraḍāwī’s view that rebellions always cause greater harm than good, as well as Michot’s Taymiyyan vision of critical patience and loyalty. Michot’s strategy of turning Gaddafi into the rebel instead of the populace might evade the issue momentarily, but it raises the question at what point does an oppressive ruler turn into an outright rebel. Clearly for both al-Qaraḍāwī and Michot there is a limit to how much oppression and injustice a people must endure before it becomes religiously imperative to respond with lethal force if possible. For Michot, the authority to demarcate that limit lies in the hands of learned religious scholars like al-Qaraḍāwī who are in tune with the widespread sensibilities of the Muslim community. It does not lie in the hands of uneducated extremists who cobble together some texts to justify a revolutionary view.⁸⁵

Ibn Taymiyya’s utilitarianism and its modern appropriation

Summing up thus far, Michot privileges Ibn Taymiyya’s quietism and ethical personalism over his anti-Mongol argument that those who abandon some aspect of Islamic law must be fought. The Prophet’s command and the traditional juristic calculus that insurrections always cause more harm than benefit constrain Ibn Taymiyya to a stance of critical loyalty and patience before his own Mamlūk rulers, and it is obvious enough that he

⁸⁴ Ibid. 3-4.

⁸⁵ Yahya M. Michot, ‘L’*autorité, l’individu et la communauté face à la shari‘a: quelques pensées d’Ibn Taymiyya*’, *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph* 54 (2012): 261-86, provides further investigation of Ibn Taymiyya’s approach to religious authority in the direction of individual conscience.

never judged his situation to be so severe—on the order of a modern Gaddafi—to warrant calling for his rulers’ demise. Thus, Michot reasons, today’s extremists cannot legitimately use Ibn Taymiyya to justify armed insurrection against their own rulers. Ibn Taymiyya’s anti-Mongol fatwas were a matter of Mamlūk war propaganda limited in use to the circumstances for which they were written.

Yet, the contrast between the severity of Ibn Taymiyya’s anti-Mongol fatwas on the one hand and the judicious and pragmatic moderation of his Mardin fatwa on the other raises a further question that Michot addresses in a long footnote in *Muslims under non-Muslim Rule*: ‘Must we conclude that Ibn Taymiyya modulates and (in the negative sense) makes a tool of the religion, fitting it to whatever objectives he is pursuing, sometimes mobilizing people, sometimes calming them down?’⁸⁶ Michot does not deny this possibility, and he translates a text in which Ibn Taymiyya outlines his utilitarianism explicitly as the path of the Prophet. The jurist explains that religious judgments should take account of the circumstances and consider the preponderant good. If, for example, a king converts to Islam but still drinks wine, he should not be prohibited from drinking wine if that would lead to him apostatising. Ibn Taymiyya concludes that the judgments of the Prophet himself varied according to the circumstances and ‘were of diverse kinds, whether it was a question for him of enjoining or prohibiting, or waging jihād or pardoning, [or when] implementing penalties, of being strict or merciful’.⁸⁷

It is not, then, a matter of Ibn Taymiyya turning religion into a tool for pursuing his objectives. It is rather that, for Ibn Taymiyya, weighing up the benefits and harms of all actions is essential to the religion, and prudent utilitarianism is the path of the Prophet. The *telos* or overall preponderant good toward which this utilitarianism aims is exclusive worship of God,⁸⁸ and violence here comes into play as one tool for attaining this objective. In his well-known treatise on Islamic polity *Al-Siyāsa al-shar‘iyya*, Ibn Taymiyya envisions the goal of humanity as worshipping God alone and the role of rulers as using their power to reform society to that end, through both religious guidance and the sword: ‘The establishment of the religion is by the Book and the sword’.⁸⁹ He further explains that violent punishments are of two kinds: 1) those imposed on deviants living under Muslim rule, and 2) fighting

⁸⁶ Michot, *Muslims*, 50-3, n. 3 (question on p. 51).

⁸⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, MF 35:32, as translated in Michot, *Muslims*, 53.

⁸⁸ On the centrality of exclusive worship of God in Ibn Taymiyya’s theology and ethics, see Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 26-9.

⁸⁹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Siyāsa al-shar‘iyya*, MF 28:28:244-397 (264); trans., Omar A. Farrukh, *Ibn Taymiyya on Public and Private Law in Islam* (Beirut: Khayat, 1966); trans., Henri Laoust, *Le traité de droit public d’Ibn Taymiyya* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1948).

against those not under Muslim control such as unbelievers living outside Muslim realms and heretics openly defying the Islamic religion.⁹⁰ Ibn Taymiyya in no way condones violence that is vengeful, senselessly destructive, or fueled by greed. The ruler must consider the overall benefits and harms of actions and choose the preponderant good.⁹¹ As Michot himself explains, coercive power is essential to Islam in Ibn Taymiyya's thinking but its exercise must be channeled solely toward the advancement of religion:

A religion without the power (*sulṭān*) to assert itself, unable or unwilling to wage jihad, and devoid of resources (*māl*) would be threatened in its existence and remains imperfect, hence the usefulness of the Mamluks. On the other hand, the pursuit of power, wealth, and war for any purpose other than establishing the religion (*iqāmat al-dīn*) is obviously to be condemned—hence the necessity of the 'ulama' to educate not only the people but also their rulers.⁹²

Given that Ibn Taymiyya legitimizes violence for no purpose other than establishing religion, Michot's characterization of his anti-Mongol fatwas as merely patriotic Mamlūk war propaganda is not entirely persuasive. It is more plausible that the fatwas ensued from Ibn Taymiyya's calculation that fighting the Mongols would further the cause of Islam. This is a calculation that Michot, as we saw earlier, discounts as shortsighted because the Mongol invasions in fact led to the Islamisation of Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Such a judgment is, of course, retrospective. Ibn Taymiyya could not have known the full consequences of fighting the Mongols, and, more generally, judging the costs and benefits of waging war accurately is usually a precarious and highly subjective undertaking.

Permeating Michot's interpretation of Ibn Taymiyya as a beacon of prudent Islamic moderation for today's world is the assumption that utilitarian reasoning is inherently tolerant, sensible, and accommodating. This makes Ibn Taymiyya's anti-Mongol fatwas look like an anomaly in a career otherwise marked by critical but prudent and loyal interaction with political power. The anti-Mongol fatwas make more sense, however, if we envision Ibn Taymiyya as a scholar and activist seeking ways to advance religion as he understood it by all

⁹⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *Siyāsa*, MF 28:349.

⁹¹ Ibid. 284. For additional discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's utilitarian or consequentialist legitimization of violence, see Jon Hoover, 'Squaring Ibn Taymiyya's Legitimization of Violence with His Vision of Universal Salvation', forthcoming in the proceedings of the 'Legitimate and Illegitimate Violence in Islamic Thought' conferences, University of Exeter, 2010-12.

⁹² Michot, 'Ibn Taymiyya', 240.

means calculated to succeed. Alongside teaching, writing, and moral activism, this meant critical obedience to his Mamlūk rulers—there was no practicable possibility of displacing them, and they could be useful for religious ends. But against alleged heretics whose defeat appeared possible and advantageous, Ibn Taymiyya was prepared to write and agitate.

Utilitarian reasoning depends on a large number of subjective human factors, and its outcomes depend to a great extent on the vision of the good to which it aspires. Thus, as with utilitarianisms more generally, Ibn Taymiyya's utilitarianism readily lends itself to different appropriations, and a wide spectrum of modern Muslims find within it the resources and flexibility to support their diverse visions of the religious good. As noted earlier, Bin Laden supported his 1996 call to war with the logic of Ibn Taymiyya's first anti-Mongol fatwa that fighting to protect religion is obligatory when the danger from not fighting is greater, even if the intentions of the jihad fighters are impure. Similarly utilitarian is al-Qaradāwī's centrist vision of political engagement, which draws on Ibn Taymiyya to support a jurisprudence of weighing up benefits and harms. As for Michot, he works hard to preclude use of Ibn Taymiyya for radical ends by underlining his critical but patient loyalty to the Mamlūk sultan and the prudence of his pragmatism. Yet, it is not certain that Ibn Taymiyya's loyalty to his ruler was absolutely unconditional. Ibn Taymiyya's loyalty might have reached a limit if the ruler had become unbearably corrupt and there had been reasonable possibility of replacing him with someone better. It could be argued that modern radicals believe at least implicitly that they have indeed reached such a limit and judged that taking up arms to dislodge allegedly apostate rulers will lead to the greater good of the religion in due course. Once such utilitarian calculations are complete, there begins the process of seeking authoritative precedents to support the chosen course of action. Ibn Taymiyya, due to the fecundity of his thought and the courageousness and diversity of his activism, all of which establish his prestige as an authority, provides precedents that may be taken in either direction: moderation or radicalism. Just as Ibn Taymiyya himself justifies fighting the invading Mongols who confessed Islam through creative interpretation of precedents from early Islamic history, so also 'Abd al-Salām Faraj and his followers appropriate Ibn Taymiyya's anti-Mongol's fatwas to justify violent insurrection against their own rulers. And no less creatively, Michot draws on Ibn Taymiyya to inform his vision of non-violent Islamic revolution and prudent Muslim engagement in society. Both Ibn Taymiyya and his diverse heirs are equally engaged in the hermeneutical appropriation of the past to meet the needs of the present. It is Michot's contention that he is appropriating Ibn Taymiyya faithfully and to the greater interest of Muslims while Islamist radicals completely betray his vision. The radicals would certainly

argue that Michot has got the utilitarian calculus of Muslim interests wrong. Michot would reply that the radicals not only lack the scholarly depth to render such judgments; they also lack the ear of the wider community of Muslim believers. Yet, all parties are in fact striving to gain a hearing within the Muslim community, and, like Ibn Taymiyya, they are no doubt seeking ways to support the Islamic religion by all means calculated to succeed. It remains a matter of difference whether and when violence is one of those means.