Abdal-Hakim Murad, Bombing without Moonlight: The Origins of Suicidal Terrorism (Bristol, UK; Amal Press, 2008), 56 pp. ISBN: 978-0-9552359-7-9.

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The one relief that we ever get from radicalised ideologies is that their madness is often responded to with sanity. The same with what is now so pejoratively and erroneously termed 'Islamic terrorism', whose baggage usually includes suicidal terrorism and extremist ideologies. Fortunately, the sober analyses that have ensued credibly dissociate them from any religious underpinnings, attributing them instead to socio-political conditions and their ideological superstructures.

Such is the perspective offered by the likes of John Gray, Olivier Roy and Slavoj Zizek. They advanced a theory that radical Islamism's origin is to be found in the conditions of late modernity and the ideologies that flourished on its soil, not in any legitimately Islamic sources. Entering the debate is the distinguished Cambridge theologian Shaykh Abdal-Hakim Murad (Timothy Winter), whose narratives on traditional Islam typically combine scholarly rigour and spiritual discernment. His distinctive contribution, *Bombing without Moonlight: The Origins of Suicidal Terrorism* situates the problem against the backdrop of religion as *living reality* experienced in human life and thus connecting the empirical and its theological ramifications. He is able to see these as religious code-names for despair, hopelessness and similar spiritual maladies that afflict late modernity. This is the factor that is always missing in any purely 'scientific' analysis.

The empirical view sees suicidal terrorism and its ideology, radical Islamism, not as a direct product of Islam itself, but arising from the conditions of late modernity, including the fragmentation of the social order, alienation, anomie, rupture of traditional bonds that once held society and rapid urbanisation and industrialisation. We always find such argument appealing because it dissociates religion from any of those misdeeds. But we often ignore that the same analysis is merely an extension of a classic Orientalist idea that, itself a legacy of Marxist materialism, not only terrorism but any form of religious resurgence —nay, *religion* itself — is due to such a condition, as if by default human beings are irreligious, which is the sort of analysis that we frequently hear from Marxist-inspired left-leaning scholars. Presumably to extricate himself from such a reading, the author then ventures into the intellectual and ideological roots of suicidal terrorism — the very components that supplied the aberration with justification or legitimacy.

Whatever the conditions that produced such state of affairs, the intellectual odyssey ends precisely when it reaches Islamic theological shores for there is nothing in the Qur'ān validating suicide, much less suicidal terrorism. Yet if Islam itself has nothing to do with it, that does not stop the author from tracing it back to *other*

religions. Thus he painstakingly excavates its origins in Hinduism (atmaghataka), Buddhism (by some monks in China aspiring to Nirvana), Judaism (in the case of Saul and Samson, as well as early rabbinic approval of self-immolation) and Christianity (Jonah's despair and pre-Augustine acceptance of self-immolation). Additionally, modern western political thought is enough smorgasbord to pander to the radicals' ideological promiscuity: the extremes of the far-right and far-left from the European political spectrum are enough 'inspiration'. By this strategy, the universality of suicidal terrorism as a human—not religious—anomaly is established while any 'suicidalist' claim to theological pedigree is refuted. The author tracks Sayyid Qutb's ideology back to the right-wing French physician and Nobel laureate, Alexis Carrel. Still, Outb is not without his religious predecessor, for we see the same dilemma is evident in the thirteenth and fourteenth century scholar Ibn Taymiyyah, an 'angry Damascene' whose "deep pessimism about the human mind and conscience" produced a sceptical theology that alienates God from the world which "challenges Ash arite and Māturidite confidences in the direct intelligibility of God in the world". St. Augustine's stark discontinuity between the City of God and the City of Man somehow found new life in such a theology. As a result religion becomes completely transcendentalised as a total 'ideal', which minimises the significance of personal religious experiences thereby exhibiting the sort of utopianism that we see in their political agendas.

But the author is far more candid than are most about our own guilt. If, as we claim, suicidal terrorism is the result of the conditions of late modernity, then surely the terrorists, extremists and radicals are not the only ones afflicted by its malaise? It seems that we are not immune, as Murad argues. If it does not manifest itself violently or militarily, it does so intellectually, ideologically or politically ("the prosperity of the far-right across the liberal West shows just how far this march has already come"). What the author does not adduce however, is the support that the US government receives from a constituent of her people to wage war against Afghanistan and Iraq (and now seemingly one with Iran and Syria is not at all impossible). He also cites as an example how Foucault is still celebrated amongst intellectuals and laymen alike. Foucault as he sees him is "a second [Mikhail] Bakunin; he was concerned, not with advancing a detailed and realistic agenda, but with a passionate desire to shock." Foucault epitomises the post-modernist enfant terrible, whose thought is always there to deconstruct, to challenge and disrupt the established order of things—the paradigmatic 'rebel without a cause.' Foucault's philosophical mentor, Nietzsche, was the one who introduced the modern superhero, the protagonist who is willing to go to suicidal ends just to get his message across (he cites both Foucault's and Nietzsche's deaths from venereal disease). In fact we think it is not Foucault but Nietzsche who is truly the embodiment of the present predicament. Different from the atheist Foucault, Nietzsche began as a devout Christian, wrote poems to God,

BOOK REVIEWS 553

went to the university initially to study theology (later he switched to philology), knew the Bible inside-out and by heart, and came from a family of pious Lutheran theologians. It was his later life experiences that brought him into a profound spiritual crisis that ultimately shattered his faith once and for all. But he went beyond mere disbelief to become an aggressively and fiercely anti-religious atheist (even calling himself the "Antichrist" and the "first immoralist"). Rarely noticed however, is that this antagonism was born precisely because of his attachment to religion, or to use Hamlet's line, he "doth protest too much". Nietzsche's agony was thus a spiritual crisis within a religious context against a socio-cultural backdrop hostile to it, different from Foucault's largely philosophical dilemma. Like many Muslims today, Nietzsche sensed a serious lack of synchrony between the Christian values that he espoused and the prevailing secular humanistic ideals of his contemporaries, but instead of resisting the latter, he succumbed to it. And here there may be signs of hope, for the conditions of late modernity could have easily produced Nietzsches out of Muslims, but they have not.

Despite going against radicalism, Murad's prescription itself is radical but profound: the defeat of the current global system and its replacement with the "ethical brilliance of monotheisms". And this partly means of course, the inner life of spirituality, the heart's idyllic sanctuary wherein the presence of the Divine is experienced most. Self-judgment, the "greatest and most irreplaceable gift of the Abrahamic religions" should be cultivated more. At the same time, the war on such ideologies cannot be severed from the "humanly consensual war on environmental loss, on unfair trade, on identity feminism, and on genetic manipulation". If we understand this reasoning correctly, the author calls for a theological orientation that addresses such contemporary crises while remaining theologically and spiritually true to its roots. Perhaps it is by this means that the asymmetry between religion and ordinary life can finally be put to an end.

Wang Yong Bao (Ahmed Musa). *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia Press, 2009). xxiv + 243pp. ISBN 978-983-3855-97-1. MYR 38.00.

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The topic of diplomatic practice and international relations in Islam has attracted a growing interest in modern Muslim thought, revisiting the rich legacy of juristic and historical treatments addressing interconnected issues relating to diplomacy. This study by a Chinese scholar with solid training in Arabic and Islamic thought, who took his BA in Libya and his MA and PhD degrees in Malaysia, is a welcome