

Nonviolent Theology in the Syrian Protests: A Critical Analysis of Jawdat Sa'īd's Qur'anic Exegesis

Rudiger Lohlker

University of Vienna, Austria
E-mail: ruediger.lohlker@univie.ac.at

Abstract

The non-violent protests in Syria against the government, before eventually being co-opted by armed forces, marked a unique resistance against the regime during that period. Jawdat Sa'īd, a theorist, writer, and activist, inspired activists during this time by advocating for a theology of non-violence as the authentic foundation for Islamic life. The theological basis was drawn from a specific interpretation of the Quran. Sa'īd's understanding of the Quranic revelation was analysed using the approach formulated by Shahab Ahmed, demonstrating its validity in comprehending Islamic thought deeply. The research problem addressed the non-violent characteristics of the Syrian protests, while the research goal aimed to unveil the critical role of Sa'īd's interpretation of the Quran in shaping this movement. Through methods involving text analysis and Sa'īd's understanding of specific verses, the research findings highlighted the impact of Sa'īd's non-violent theology on activists and the foundation for peaceful resistance. The research conclusion emphasised the importance of contextual understanding of the Quran and a non-violent perspective in shaping social movements. This study contributes to a better understanding of contemporary Islamic thought and strategies for resistance that can be adopted in similar contexts.

Keywords: Non-Violent Protest, Quranic Interpretation, Jawdat Sa'īd, Syrian Activism

INTRODUCTION

Jawdat Sa'īd (1931-2022 CE) stands out as a luminary among Muslim intellectuals and activists, dedicated to advancing the notion of Islam as a religion of nonviolence. His lifelong commitment led to developing a distinctive Islamic theology centred on nonviolence. However, a comprehensive analysis of his theological ideas and discourse strategies remains notably scarce in existing scholarship (Daneshgar et al., 2016; Riddell, 2017). This study seeks to fill this void by delving into the core of Sa'īd's nonviolence theory, grounded in a radical reinterpretation of the Qur'an. With an awareness of the rich tradition of Qur'anic interpretation in the Malay-Indonesian world, we aim to scrutinise Sa'īd's exegetical strategy, challenging conventional Islamic worldviews and engaging critically with influential figures such as Sayyid Qutb (Campanini, 2011; Sonn, 1985).

Despite Jawdat Sa'īd's pivotal role in promoting nonviolence within Islamic discourse, scholarly attention to his work remains limited. Existing studies, such as those by Dziaczkowska and Messina (2020), Kahf (2014), Lohlker (2022), and Muller (2010), offer valuable insights into Sa'īd's contributions. Still, a comprehensive analysis of his approach to tafsīr, particularly in the context of nonviolence hermeneutics, is conspicuously absent. Noteworthy is a recent Master's thesis by Madany (2021), which focuses on Sa'īd's interpretation of specific Qur'anic verses. However, the need for a more thorough exploration of Sa'īd's engagement with the Qur'an persists, and this study aims to address that gap.

Central to Sa'īd's (1993) nonviolence theory is his radical reinterpretation of the Qur'an. While traditional interpretations have often justified violence in certain contexts, Sa'īd's approach challenges these conventional

* Copyright (c) 2024 **Rudiger Lohlker**

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

Received: September 15, 2023; Revised: October 24, 2023; Accepted: December 23, 2023

readings. His engagement with the Qur'an reflects a critical stance towards figures like Sayyid Qutb, whose exegesis has influenced Islamic thought significantly. Sa'īd's inaugural work can be understood as a critique of Qutb's perspectives, laying the groundwork for a distinct nonviolent theology rooted in the Qur'an. By exploring Sa'īd's key concepts, such as contextual interpretation and rejection of violence, this study aims to unravel the novel dimensions of his nonviolence theory.

This research contributes significantly to understanding Jawdat Sa'īd's intellectual legacy and, by extension, the broader discourse on Islam and nonviolence. By employing a Shahab Ahmed-inspired methodology, we offer a nuanced analysis of Sa'īd's hermeneutics, emphasising his nonviolence theory's novelty in the Qur'anic interpretation context. This exploration fills a critical gap in existing scholarship and invites further dialogue on the diverse interpretations within Islamic thought regarding violence and nonviolence. Understanding Sa'īd's nonviolence theory enriches our comprehension of his intellectual contributions and provides valuable insights for contemporary discussions on reconciling Islam with nonviolent principles.

In unraveling the intricacies of Jawdat Sa'īd's nonviolence theory, our methodological approach synthesizes elements from Shahab Ahmed's emphasis on historical contextualization in Islamic thought and rhizomatic methodologies inspired by Deleuze and Guattari. Ahmed's framework guides our exploration of Sa'īd's nonviolence theory within the historical development of Islamic thought, fostering a holistic understanding by considering diverse intellectual traditions. Rhizomatic methodologies, with their non-linear and interconnected framework, complement this approach by acknowledging the multiplicity of influences shaping Sa'īd's unique nonviolent hermeneutics. Through textual analysis, we scrutinize Sa'īd's writings with a rhizomatic lens, recognizing the proliferation of ideas across various nodes. This allows for a nuanced understanding of how nonviolence is woven into his theological framework, considering both explicit and implicit connections within the broader context of Islamic thought. Beyond contextualization, the rhizomatic approach is employed to juxtapose Sa'īd's interpretations with traditional and contemporary perspectives on nonviolence within Islam, showcasing the distinctiveness of his hermeneutics and its dynamic engagement with broader discourses. By integrating these methodologies, we aim not only to reveal the intricacies of Sa'īd's nonviolence theory but also to underscore its broader implications for the discourse on Islam and nonviolence, fostering open-ended exploration and inviting further dialogues within Islamic studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Unveiling the Hermeneutical Landscape: A Shahabian Exploration of Jawdat Sa'īd's Contextualized Nonviolence

A Shahabian Approach

We will situate the ideas and practice of Jawdat Sa'īd in the Context of revelation. Following Shahab Ahmed, this means (Honan & Sellers, 2006) that the Con-Text of Revelation is the outcome of previous – logically and not chronologically – hermeneutical engagement with it. This body of meaning produced by human engagement with Revelation is, “in other words, that whole field or complex or vocabulary of meanings of Revelation that have been made in the course of the human and historical hermeneutical engagement with Revelation, and which are thus already present as Islam (Ahmed, 2016).“

Ahmed continues

Con-Text is thus the entire accumulated lexicon of means and meanings of Islam that has been historically generated and recorded up to any given moment: it is the full historical vocabulary of Islam at any given moment. When a Muslim seeks to make meaning in terms of Islam, he necessarily does so in engagement with and by use of the existing terms of engagement—that is, in engagement with and by use of the current vocabulary of Islam. The vocabulary of Islam registers, denotes and makes available the meanings of previous hermeneutical engagements; the meanings of the last hermeneutical engagements are, in other words, discernibly embedded in the semantic units of this existing vocabulary of forms. Thus, in a given time or place, for the meaning of an act or utterance to be recognisable in terms of Islam, it must be expressed in the vocabulary of Con-Text (Ahmed, 2016).

Ahmed uses other important terms in his analysis of the process described above. These terms are Pre-Text and Text (Lohlker, 2022). Pre-text is not to be understood chronologically before the Text of the revelation/the Qur'ān. It is ontologically and alethically before it but encompasses “the Unseen Pre-Text of the Revelation” always present (Ahmed, 2016). The hermeneutical engagement with the Text/the Qur'ān, be it of Sa'īd or other Muslim authors, takes place in the world of the Unseen of the Pre-Text and is made liveable in the Con-Text. The Con-Text can be attributed and traced to the Text and Pre-Text and provides the web of meaning(s) Muslims live their hermeneutical engagement with Revelation (Ahmed, 2016). The hermeneutical engagement of Sa'īd is part of this dynamic process. It contributes to contemporary Islam's web of meaning(s) in a specific way emerging from a particular Pre-Text. The most important part of the Pre-Text relevant to our analysis is the biography of Jawdat Sa'īd.

The biography of Jawdat Sa'īd – some remarks

The best short biography was written by Crow (jawdatsaid.net, 2022b). He states that Sa'īd was born in 1931 in a Circassian village south of Qunaytra in the Golan Heights. His family came as part of the Circassian immigration from Russia to the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century CE. Thus, we may have the first elements of the pre-text of later Jawdat Sa'īd: minority family and migrant tradition. At fifteen, he was sent to the al-Azhar University as a student and graduated in 1957 with a university degree in Arabic literature and a diploma in education. This stay in Egypt was crucial for the intellectual development of Sa'īd, putting him in the network of conversations in the Arabic and Islamic world. Thus, a new Pre-Text emerged, allowing him to walk in new ways and rethink his preconceived ideas (Murphy, 2002).

Returning to Syria, he worked as a teacher for over ten years. Still, he was dismissed from employment because of his ideas on Islamic peace, the implications of these ideas for social transformations, and his activism by lecturing for Syrian civil society organisations. He served his first prison term in 1968. He was in prison five times until 1973, then under constant surveillance. Thus, he lived in a Tolstoy-like way in voluntary exile, working at his family's apiary in Bi'r 'Ajam.

He has been to prison under the Ba'th regime five times, usually for periods of several months, the last time being in 1973. During the early 1980s, when the Syrian Ikhwan al-Muslimin (Muslim Brethren) were actively opposing President Asad's regime, he was often interrogated and watched. However, he had never been a member of the Muslim Brethren, and this first conflictual period helped him deepen his engagement with the Text of the Qur'anic revelation, creating a new Con-Text that informed his activities and ideas in the following period.

In the 1990s, he gradually became more active in Syrian civil society, engaging in dialogue with a wide spectrum of Syrian activism following his ideas of tolerance and acceptance of diverse ideas in the pursuit of

solutions for societal problems. Thus, the ongoing engagement with the Qur'anic revelation by Jawdat Sa'īd opens up a space allowing diverse opinions to engage in a vivid dialogue.

Influences

Jawdat Sa'īd spent the years from 1946 to 1958 in Egypt and was part of the ongoing conversations inspired by, e.g., Abū A'lā Mawdūdī (d. 1979 CE), Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1897 CE), Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905 CE), Rashīd Ridā (d. 1935 CE), Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273 CE), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350 CE), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328 CE), Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 CE), Ibn Rushd (d. 1198 CE), and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406 CE), i. e., many of the important thinkers of Sunni Islam.

More important influences on Jawdat Sa'īd were Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938 CE) and Malik Bennabi (d. 1973 CE), two of the most influential thinkers of the modern Islamic world (Benlahcene, 2011; Eivazi & Naserkhaki, 2017; Hillier, 2015; Majeed, 2020; Patria, 2021). Their ideas about creating a specific Islamic identity in the life of believers and a Muslim civilisation not dependent on the reactions to non-Muslim dominance over the Islamic world seemed to be of special importance for Sa'īd. This may circumscribe the Con-Text Sa'īd starts his intellectual thought.

After staying in Egypt, he travelled to Saudi Arabia and the then United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria; then he travelled to Iraq, India, and Pakistan. Thus, he gained first-hand knowledge of many parts of the Islamic world. He also met the influential Islamic scholar Abul Hasan 'Alī Nadwī (d. 1999 CE) in India and received first-hand knowledge about the South-Asian tradition of non-violence.

Jawdat Sa'īd was a prolific writer and speaker. We cannot discuss all the works of Jawdat Sa'īd here. His works are available online (jawdatsaid.net, 2022a) and in printed form (Al-Marzūqī, 2008). The focus of these considerations is his methodology of a nonviolent reading of the Qur'an, i.e., his specific engagement with the hermeneutics of the revelation.

Jawdat Sa'īd and tafsīr

Following a recent analysis, we may define the form of his engagement as a hermeneutics of 'mix and match' (Sağir, 2017), i.e., he puts its wide range of reading the Qur'an at the service of a very specific, mostly previously formulated or even only guessed reading goal. This reading is superior to the whole exegetical process of Jawdat Sa'īd (Sağir, 2017). He is not adhering to any particular school of tafsīr following his methodology that is not adhering to the discipline of tafsīr.

The Path of Adam's First Son

The first book of Jawdat Sa'īd presenting his methodology of Qur'anic hermeneutics is *The Path of Adam's First Son: The Problem of Violence in Islamic Activism* (Sa'īd, 1993). His 'mix and match' methodology and the orientation of his reading of the Qur'anic revelation on the requirements of his reading goals may be demonstrated by quoting a section of his conclusion:

"Violence is the malady of our era, demanding a profound transformation in human behavior. We find ourselves stuck at the juncture where angels accused the Sons of Adam (banī Ādam) of causing corruption on earth and shedding blood. 'They said: 'Wilt thou place therein one who will work corruption therein, and shed blood, while we hymn Thy praise and call Thee holy?' He said: 'Truly, I know what you know not (2, al-baqara, 30) (Nasr et al., 2015)."

"We still bear the sign of the son of Adam who is doomed to failure and whose sacrifice is not accepted. For him, the [only] solution for his problem was to say to his brother: 'I will surely slay you!' (5, al-mā'ida, 27) But at first, we [should] remind ourselves how a notable man (wājih) children of Israel (banū isrā'īl)

turned to Moses (Praise be upon him) [...] and said to him: '...we were persecuted before you came to us, and after you came to us.' (7, al-a'rāf, 129) Answering [to this question] mixed with pain and grief: 'It may be that your Lord will destroy your enemies and make you viceregents upon the earth, that he may observe how you behave (7, al-a'rāf, 129) (Nasr et al., 2015)."

The Pre-Text of Sa'īd's exegesis is the role of violence in contemporary societies and the need to transform human behavior. When engaging with the Qur'anic Text, he quotes a diagnosis of the mental state of humanity relating to the primeval killing among the sons of the prophet Adam. Then he turns to the Israelites, their suffering, and the statement of the prophet Moses that this may lead to salvation by god. This produces a Con-Text of accepting tribulations without fighting against them as a prerequisite for salvation. Sa'īd, thus, argues for a non-violent attitude that appears simultaneously – Ahmed's arguments are organized logically and not chronologically – as the Pre-Text of his reading of the Qur'an.

In another text, Sa'īd mentioned that the first time he publicly spoke about the Path of Adam's Son (Kurtz, 2018) was in 1965 CE during the Friday prayer during Ramadan. He describes the emergence of the idea of Adam's first son suffering from his brother's deed during his time as a student at the al-Azhar University in Cairo, where Sa'īd experienced the problematic situation of the Arab and Islamic world (Sa'īd, 2022). Which kind of theology emerged from this understanding of this situation? (Lohlker, 2022).

For Jawdat Sa'īd, the relationship between the two vital factors of the Muslim community, namely law and religion, should be constructive. This relationship has been hotly debated among Muslim thinkers by the problem of imitation. This imitation was tightly bound with the sphere of Islamic jurisprudence and, according to several intellectuals, led directly to the era of decline in Muslim thought, invention, and civilization as a whole. In this case, Sa'īd was strongly influenced by another great Muslim thinker of Jewish descent, Muḥammad Asad (1900–1992), who commented in his highly acclaimed book *Islam at the Crossroads*. In contrast, Islam was a perfect system for humanity; it was its believers who failed to live according to its message.

He believes that one recurring theme in Sa'īd's thought is the need to observe laws, which constitute a profound part of knowledge. He particularly strongly stresses the notion of change that needs to occur, quoting the Qur'ān: Verily never will God change a people's condition until they change what is in their souls. The law allows duties, obligations, and freedoms to be established, but it is an injustice that destroys societies. It is humans that are faulty, not the law itself. Law is supposed to protect everyone. In the cycle of history, people relinquish their right to protection and leave it to the law. Sa'īd warns that when a person gets his right to self-protection, by which he means any violent means, the individual once again becomes part of the law of the jungle, force. Law, on the other hand, is opposed to violence. The question one needs to ask is, when exactly did the shift between the law of violence and dialogue take place?" (Said, 2001).

The first formulation of his theology is in his book *Ibn Ādam al-awwal*, mentioned above. We will follow the analysis of Rak we quoted above (Honan & Sellers, 2006). The book's starting point is the story of Cain and Abel as told in the Qur'an – another case of hermeneutic engagement of Sa'īd with the Text of the revelation. It reads:

And recite unto them, with truth, the account of Adam's two sons, when they offered a, and it was accepted from one of them, though not received from the other. One said: ,I will surely slay you! [The other] said: ,God takes only from the reverent. Even if you stretch forth your hand against me to kill me, I shall not try on my hand against you to kill you. Truly, I fear God, Lord of the worlds. I desire you to be burdened with my sin and your sin and become one of the inhabitants of the fire. Such is the recompense of the wrongdoers.' Then his soul prompted him to slay his brother, and he slew him and thus became to be among the losers. Then God sent a crow, scratching the earth, to show him how he might conceal his brother's nakedness. He said, "Oh, woe unto me! Am I not able to be even as this crow and hide my brother's nakedness?" And he came to be among the remorseful." (Sura 5, al-mā'ida, 27-31) (Nasr et al., 2015).

Abel refraining from slaying his brother embodies the philosophy of nonviolence so dear to Sa'īd. The result of Cain's slaying Abel is the grief and sorrow of Cain, as described by Sa'īd. Thus, Abel is the reference point for the historical shift in human behavior by not reacting violently.

Humanity arises from violence, the period of muscles – as Sa'īd states – to the period of mind and comprehension, leading it to grant moral values a growing presence in one's actions. The choice between right and wrong actions is still voluntary. Still, in Abel's choice to act against violent methods, one can notice the introduction of the law of dialogue and openness to the Other that is visible in acts of moral responsibility, which is one of the key factors driving human nature in its decisions. A different decision made by Abel would only bring human regression. God, by creating people and granting them the role of being His viceregents on earth, expects that humankind will finally start acting according to the role presented to them. The shift in authority, first based on violence, later leads to comprehension. Sa'īd sees this as an evolution from the law of the jungle to the law of understanding. This behavior is full of trust in human evolution. Violent actions are perceived as a form of regression understood as blasphemy, which is considered a major crime in Islam because it means acting against nature and God's order (Rak, 2016).

A preface to another edition of this work of Sa'īd allows for deeper insights into the thought of Jawdat Sa'īd.

The Problem of Violence – A Preface

The text we will look again into now is *The Path of Adam's First Son* (Pregill, 2022), esp. the preface to the third edition of his fundamental work on the theology of nonviolence. We cannot discuss this text in every detail, focusing on his position on what he called *khawarij jihad*. The fundamental distinction he makes is between *jihad* and *khawarij jihad*. The context of his thought is the complex "facts of history, or, in Qur'anic terms, the signs of the world out there and the signs of human life keep accumulating" (Sa'īd, 1993) that turns out to be the Pre-Text of Sa'īd's new engagement with the Qur'anic Text. He calls the result of his engagement "un-heard ideas" (Sa'īd, 1993).

Hence, he turns to the question of *jihad* and *khawarij jihad*. To introduce his ideas, he argues that creation is made to be diverse, referring to Sura 29, *al-'ankabūt*, 20: "Say, 'journey upon the earth and observe How he originated creation (Nasr et al., 2015).'" Sa'īd states after discussing several other verses and Hadiths: "Many Verses of the Qur'an assert that new meanings will come to light that were not known before (Sa'īd, 1993)."¹ Sa'īd continues to give more quotations from the Qur'anic text he engages with. This puts a new Context to the following elaborations for non-violence and against violence.

Sa'īd argues in the chapter "Examples from the Prophet's lives to illustrate their suffering harm without retaliating (Sa'īd, 1993)" that the examples he gives demonstrate that "the prophets' conflict with their peoples was never on account of their conspiring to assassinate or engage in any violence - it was merely that they declared: 'Our Only Lord is God (Sa'īd, 1993).'"² He continues presenting several Qur'anic quotations from Noah, Hūd, Moses, Jesus, and the prophet Muhammad. For the case of the prophet Muhammad Sa'īd refers to Ibn Kathīr, Rashīd Ridā, and al-Mawdūdī for further explanation of his exegesis (Sa'īd, 1993).

The distinction Sa'īd makes between *jihad* and *khawarij jihad* is again corroborated by argument from the Qur'an but at first formulates a reading goal: "A *khawarij* way is to employ force and violence to secure rule (Sa'īd, 1993)."³ The *jihad* way is, thus, summarised:

To sum up, for *rightful jihad*, there are two conditions. One related to the one who carries out *jihad* is to have secured rule with the consent and agreement of the people. A condition related to the party to be fought is that they compel people to enter a certain religion or abandon their faith. This compulsion was common when

Islam emerged, practised by Quraish and almost all those with some authority. Islam was introducing a new principle, freedom of conviction (Sa'īd, 1993).“

Since a fundamental principle for Sa'īd is the saying of the Qur'an (Nasr et al., 2015). There is no coercion religion (2, al-baqara, 256). This means that military jihad and the use of violence are not allowed anymore – unless there may be reasons for self-defense from a restrictive point of view.

This exegesis of Sa'īd is not about discussing non-violence alone. Social activism is part and parcel of the thought of Sa'īd, a Con-Text turned into the Pre-Text of his exegesis. In the passage on Moses, we read: “Many systems seem to take it as a given that to live under the shade of a system, one is enslaved by that system, and must obey unthinkingly - but the prophets did not accept this principle (Sa'īd, 1993).“

Similarly, Sa'īd argues “that by doing one's duty, one's right will descend to them from the sky. It was Malek Bennabi who taught us this principle (Sa'īd, 1993).“ Sa'īd reads this principle as an entitlement to fight injustice, thus opening the way to civil disobedience against injustice.

Referring to a saying by Ibn Taymiyya Sa'īd said that the rule of the sword is equated to the law of the jungle, the rule of law is secured by following Islam and not forcing anybody to confess a religious conviction (Sa'īd, 1993). This reference is to be understood similarly to the former one.

Be like the Son of Adam!

The last text studied here refers again to Sa'īd's theology of the first son of Adam (Sa'īd, 1993). The imperative *Kun ka-Ibn Ādam* (Be like the son of Adam!) is clear. Many ideas are discussed in this text, but we will have to turn to the discussion of the use of violence by Sa'īd.

We will focus on the section called “Leaving the Game of the Vanquisher (*qāhir*) and the Vanquished (*maqhūr*)“, a recurrent issue in this text. The seemingly inevitable history of a sequence of negative events is based, Sa'īd tells us, on a defective understanding of the goal of history and the will of God. Starting from this Pre-Text using implicit references to the Qur'an, he quotes the Qur'anic Text: “And God prevails over His affair, but most of humanity know not.” (Sura 12, *yūsuf*, 21) (Nasr et al., 2015) “Truly they see it as far off, but We see it as nigh.” (Sura 70, *al-a'rāf*, 6-7)

Sa'īd defines the problem of this dialectics of the vanquisher and the vanquished as follows (Nasr et al., 2015): “The first difficulty seizing [the mind] of the vanquisher is the fear to become vanquished again, the second one is the desire of the vanquished to become vanquisher .“ The third approach is hidden by the ongoing exchange of the two positions throughout history.

He then equates the difficulty of the duality of the two positions described with the pre-Islamic (*jāhiliyya*) situation turning to a religion of professing the oneness of God (*tawhīd*), thus linking again to the text of the revelation. Sa'īd stresses the need to disseminate the message of non-violence notwithstanding the difficulties that may appear. He tells the story of one of his followers:

When I wrote *Madhhab ibn Ādam al-awwal*, it displeased some of my pure-minded friends that it may bring down the ambitions (*imam*) of the Muslims. But after twenty years, one of my friends came to me and told me: Twenty years ago, I opposed it, but now I am sensing that there is no other way than this for us (Sa'īd, 2022).

This story demonstrates the internal contestation over the theory and theology of Sa'īd in Syria and the different conclusions drawn from the hermeneutics of the Qur'an: the one drawn by Sa'īd, the other one drawn by close friends of him much more in consonance with what is imagined as the general ambitions of the Muslims (*imam al-muslimīn*).

Leaving aside “the path of Adam’s first son“, another important notion is the reference to Sura 2, al-baqara, 256. Introducing it with elaborations on the need for sound judgement (rushd) Sa'īd quotes (Sa'īd, 2022):

“There is no coercion in religion. Good judgment has become clear from error. So whoever disavows false deities and believes in God has grasped the most unfailing handhold, which never breaks. And God is Hearing, Knowing“

Thus, he presents as a Pre-Text the need to liberate humanity from misconceptions about the inevitable use of violence. Then he turned to the Text of the Qur'anic revelation. This Text is linked to a series of questions showing the ability of Sa'īd to apply dimensions of the disciplines related to the Qur'an.

From this verse, he asks how to tell the difference between sound judgement (rushd) and error (ghayy). The next question asks how the inner meaning (ma'nā) can be re-established for this verse. The third one asks how it is possible to categorise this verse as one that abrogates others (nāsikh) while most Muslims classify it as being cancelled by other verses (mansūkh).

Sa'īd explains that this verse has been revealed directly after the throne verse (2, al-baqara, 255), the verse used by Muslims worldwide to protect man against evil (shurūr). He stresses that the throne verse is one of the Qur's most venerated verses since it references the oneness: “God, there is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting. Neither slumber overtakes Him nor sleep (Sa'īd, 2022).“ Thus, he links one central verse of his engagement with the revelation to a verse main to the revelation, creating a new Con-Text by which he can rethink the revelation as being understood as non-coercive.

CONCLUSION

The essence guiding Sa'īd's exegesis revolves around a transformative shift from the focus on the second son of Ādam to the plight of the first son, emphasizing the transition from being the perpetrator of violence to becoming a victim of it. Describing Sa'īd's tafsīr methodology as a form of "mix and match," he liberates himself from the constraints of traditional tafsīr frameworks, paving the way for innovative engagements with the Qur'anic revelation. Employing Shahab Ahmed's categories, an analysis of this novel approach reveals how Jawdat Sa'īd opened up fresh perspectives within Islamic thought and crafted an authentic theology of non-violence rooted in his unique interpretation of the Qur'anic text. His self-critical stance and commitment to continuous improvement, evident in his reevaluation after the publication of his initial book, position him as an exemplary thinker advocating the ongoing necessity for human self-improvement.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. (2016). *What is Islam? The importance of being Islamic*. Princeton University Press.
- Al-Marzūqī, A. Y. (2008). *Jawdat Sa'īd: buhūth wa-maqālāt muhdāt ilayhī*. Dār al-Fikr.
- Benlahcene, B. (2011). *The Socio-intellectual Foundations of Malek Bennabi's Approach to Civilization*. International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).
- Campanini, M. (2011). *The Qur'an: Modern Muslim Interpretations*, London. Routledge.
- Daneshgar, M., Riddell, P. G., & Rippin, A. (2016). *The Qur'an in the Malay-Indonesian World: Context and Interpretation*. Routledge.
- Dziaczkowska, M., & Messina, A. V. (2020). *Jews in dialogue: Jewish responses to the challenges of multicultural contemporaneity* (Vol. 2). Brill.
- Eivazi, M. R., & Naserkhaki, H. (2017). The Intellectual Process of the Islamic World Unity in the Thoughts of Muslim Thinkers. *The Journal of Political Thought in Islam*, 4(12), 7–34.

- Hillier, C. (2015). *Muhammad Iqbal: Essays on the Reconstruction of Modern Muslim Thought*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Honan, E., & Sellers, M. (2006). So how does it work?—Rhizomatic methodologies. *AARE Annual Conference, Adelaide*.
- jawdatsaid.net. (2022a). *A Week with the Intellectual World of Jawdat Saeed*. Jawdatsaid.Net. https://jawdatsaid.net/index.php?title=الصفحة_الرئيسية
- jawdatsaid.net. (2022b). *The best visual biography, The exact birth date in the video is January 31, 1931*. Jawdatsaid.Net. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iISFtEab11Y>
- Kahf, M. (2014). Nonviolence in Syria. *Fellowship*, 78(1–3), 16.
- Kurtz, L. R. (2018). *The warrior and the pacifist: competing motifs in Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Routledge.
- Lohlker, R. (2022). Jawdat Sa'īd and the Islamic Theology and Practice of Peace. *Religions*, 13(2).
- Madany, A. S. (2021). *Telah hermeneutika nirkekerasan Jawdat Said*. UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta.
- Majeed, J. (2020). *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, aesthetics and postcolonialism*. Taylor & Francis.
- Muller, J.-M. (2010). *Désarmer les dieux: le christianisme et l'islam au regard de l'exigence de non-violence*. Le Relié.
- Murphy, C. (2002). *Passion for Islam: Shaping the Modern Middle East: The Egyptian Experience*. Simon and Schuster.
- Nasr, S. H., Dagli, C. K., Dakake, M. M., Lombard, J. E. B., & Rustom, M. (2015). *The Study Quran. A New Translation and Commentary*, 19.
- Patria, M. Y. (2021). Transforming the Post-Muwahhiddūn Man: Malik Bennabi's Critique of the Contemporary Muslim Society. *Journal of Islamic World and Politics*, 5(1), 55–78.
- Pregill, M. (2022). The Two Sons of Adam: Rabbinic Resonances and Scriptural Virtuosity in Sūrat al-Mā'idah. *Journal of the International Qur'anic Studies Association*, 6(1), 167–224.
- Rak, K. (2016). Jawdat Sa'īd's Thought within the Discourse of Muslim Revival. *Hemispheres*, 31(2), 33.
- Riddell, P. G. (2017). *Malay court religion, culture and language: Interpreting the Qur'ān in 17th century Aceh* (Vol. 12). Brill.
- Sa'īd, J. (1993). *Madhhab ibn Ādam al-awwal: Mushkilat al-'unf fi 'amal al-islāmī*. Dār al-Fikr.
- Sa'īd, J. (1993). *The Way of Adam's Upright Son: The Problem of Violence in the Islamic Work*. Qunaytara.
- SAĞIR, F. (2017). Der Koran als Korrektiv. *Degruyter*, 1(1).
- Sa'īd, J. (2022). *Kun ka-Ibn Ādam!* Jawdatsaid.Net. jawdatsaid.net
- Said, J. (2001). Law, Religion and the Prophetic Method of Social Change. *Journal of Law and Religion*, 15, 83–150.
- Sa'īd, J. (1993). *Madhhab Ibn Ādam al-awwal: Mushkilat al-'unf fi 'amal al-islāmī* (Dār al-fik).
- Sa'īd, J. (2022). *Li-mādhā al-lā'uf?* Jawdatsaid.Net. https://jawdatsaid.net/index.php?title=لماذا_اللاعنف
- Sonn, T. (1985). Carré: Mystique et politique: Lecture révolutionnaire du Coran par Sayyid Qutb, Frère musulman radical (Book Review). *Middle East Journal*, 39(4), 865.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rudiger Lohlker, I am professor for Islamic Studies, Oriental Institute at the University of Vienna since 2003 and vice-speaker of the Research Center Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society at the University of Vienna. My current research interests are the history of Sufism, esp., waḥdat al-wujūd, Islamic politic thought, history of Islamic ideas, comparative studies on religion, and history of Orientalism.