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Jihadism as an Anomic Ideology: Interrogating the Western Origins of Islamic State

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The present paper argues that the commonplace trajectory of Jihadism as a rearticulation of Islam’s scriptural injunctions is beholden to Orientalist biases. Instead the paper considers the ideational metastructure of Jihadism to find significant borrowing from Western totalitarian ideas with an admixture of Islamicate terminology. As such, it is possible for Jihadism to be politically anti-Western but epistemologically Western. Understanding Jihadism as a hybrid ideology helps us not only in comprehending the synthetic nature of its thought complex (which has repercussions for its claim to authenticity over expediency) but also to understand its contemporary appeal within a context of the anomie, or societal breakdown and reconstrual of normativity, that Durkheim identified as characteristic of Western late-modernity.