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possibilities: senses of rootedness in large part defined by the faith provide both a kind of communal security and a suggestive "pathway" to the *umma*.

For some Muslim intellectuals such as Mohamed Talbi, the very idea of pan-Islamism is a 'mixture of nostalgia and imagination'. The political interpretation of the *umma* concept is a modern contrivance, one that strips it of the ethical core centred on the Qur'an. Kelly Al-Dakkak explains that, consistent with his general approach, universal values such as consultation, rather than social institutions like democracy, are what count. In the same vein, the *umma* is a fideistic community in tune with divine will, not a political or social construction. Talbi's perspective is the polar opposite of the social scientific argument put forward in the Widhiyoga article. For Talbi, the concept itself is eternal and sufficient; it is an illuminating 'category' that does not require, and indeed is antithetical to, concrete manifestation. Such a development leads to the instrumentalisation of a purely moral idea, with political elites seeking to enlist it in the service of their own power. To misuse the word *umma* is to obscure its real and transcendent meaning.

Ravza Altuntaş-Çakır shows that Hekmettin Karaman's view of the *umma* bridges a number of perspectives reviewed here. He understands it as global, faith-based and historically verified, but, unlike Talbi, accepts that it has inherent political qualities. The common spiritual bonds of Muslims are a given, but if they are to be effective, as they must, they need to be materialised. In line with Qur'anic injunction (21:92), unity is the optimal goal and authority over the community a necessity. Differences are inevitable and acceptable, so long as they are not exclusionary or violently expressed, and the current sad state requires structural and political redress. As the Muslim Brotherhood has come to accept, the modern nation-state, as regrettable as it is, is an established institution, but it is neither unchangeable nor eternal for Karaman. A comprehensive political association of Muslims is required, but, in order to avoid the impracticality of a revived caliphate or the authoritarianism of would-be guardians of the *umma*, a bottom-up approach is critical. A coalition of intellectual, political and religious figures has a duty to raise consciousness – to encourage an "unlearning" of nationalism and political partisanship. While inescapable, the task is formidable, however.

In Karaman's view – and a fitting conclusion to this issue's special section – given the realities of modern societies and political interests, the journey (*seyri suluk*), more than arrival at the destination, is the challenge for Muslims today.

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The Construction of the Umma: From Global Consciousness to an Aspirational Global Society

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The articulation of Islamic solidarity has been prevalent throughout Muslim history. This sense of solidarity was founded upon the belief that all Muslims are brothers, that all Muslims are the members of a comprehensive Islamic society. Watt describes the Muslims' view on the *umma* as a form of 'charismatic community'.[1] In this sense, Muslims see the *umma* not simply as a social phenomenon. But whether and how it has been transformed into social practices ingrained in Muslim societies today can perhaps be understood by using social science perspectives.

The Construction of Social Reality

Society, according to Berger and Luckmann, is the product of humans' consciousness. In order for an idea to be able to affect society, it has to go through the three stages of externalisation, objectivation and internalisation. The first stage, externalisation, is done when humans are expressing their subjective ideas to other humans. The second stage, objectivation, happens whenever humans put their ideas into signs or material objects available to them, allowing other humans to perceive their idea and agreeing to it. This forms an intersubjectivity that then affects their perception of the society. When this particular idea has gained enough followers to be the dominant idea, the society transforms itself, adjusting itself to the new dominant idea. What had been a subjective idea now becomes "objective" and the third process, internalisation, begins when the society teaches the idea as the objective reality to the next generation.[2]

It is important to note that despite an idea's dominance in a society, the idea will always require certain forms of legitimation in order to maintain its position. There are levels of legitimation that help legitimate an idea. The most fundamental is the transmission of language whose vocabulary defines and supports the idea, providing tools for conversation on the idea. The next levels are the development of theoretical propositions and the articulations of theories to explain and justify the idea further. The highest form of legitimation is the establishment of a *symbolic universe*, which is the amalgamation of bodies of theoretical traditions that support the idea. It

[1] M. Watt, "The Conception of the Charismatic Community in Islam", *Numen*, 7 (1960), 77–90: 79.
[2] P. L. Berger & T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden city, N. Y: Doubleday, 1966), 33–42.

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Conceptualising the *Umma*: An Introduction[1]

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Muslim societies, like all others, are inexorably interconnected with cultural exchanges, intimate political interactions and a degree of economic interdependence.[2] Building on historical precedents, 'Islam' has seemed naturally cosmopolitan. Over time Muslims have developed a sense of interconnectedness, even an idealisation of unity, as seemingly contradictory trends unfolded – as states and parochial identities became entrenched in the Muslim world and as broader networks have emerged. A cosmopolitan sense of identity has at times taken on the form of an explicit ideology – pan-Islamism – which itself has often been viewed as hostile and aggressive. The *umma* or community of faith has emerged as one of the central concepts of contemporary Islam, hardened in some quarters into an ideology, even a weapon, but also conceived of and represented in diverse cultural forms as well as in the everyday practice of the faith. This issue of *Muslim World* seeks to examine how the idea of the *umma* has been constructed in the modern era, even though its precise meaning has remained vague.

[1] This volume emerges from two workshops on "Conceptualising the *Umma*," funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the United Kingdom, held at Durham University, 23-24 April 2014, and in Kuala Lumpur, in association with Nottingham University/Malaysia, 10-11 December 2014. The participants are grateful, at Durham University, to Professor Anoushiravan Ehteshami for his inspiration, Dr Lorraine Holmes for her resolution of scholarly and logistical mysteries, and Clemens Chay for his organisational skills; at Nottingham University/Malaysia, Professor Sean Matthews for his congenial hosting and cross-disciplinary insights, and Professor Gaik Cheng Koo, for broadening our horizons; and at Australian National University, to Professor Amin Saikal for his encouragement, Dr Raihan Ismail for sharing her ideas, Dr Anita Mack for research support, and Rachel Larobina for her technical wizardry. We also wish to acknowledge the contributions of Professor Yahya Michot, Hartford Seminary, Professor Mohammad Talib, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Oxford University, Professor Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk, Qatar University, Dr Faiz Sheikh, Marie Curie Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Hamburg, and Dr Adis Duderija, Griffith University, for the erudition and intellectual stimulation they provided in the workshops.
[2] Parts of this article are drawn from a Centenary Lecture at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, "In Search of the *Umma*: The Social Imaginary and its Discontents," 6 December 2016. I am grateful to Dr Reem Abou-El-Fadl and Professor Salwa Ismail for their kind invitation and unwavering collegiality.

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