

# Sects, Lies, and the Caliphate: Ten Years of Observations on Islam

Timothy R. Furnish PhD

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Sects, Lies, and the Caliphate: Ten Years of Observations on Islam Timothy R. Furnish PhD Most in the West are loathe to admit that it needs but one foe to breed a war, not two, and that substantial sectors of the Islamic world have indeed declared jihad against any and all enemies, most particularly the Christian world. The world's second-largest religion is dominated by three elements which must be understood to make sense of this clash of civilizations currently raging. First, Islam is comprised of dozens of sects, not merely Sunnis and Shi'is; and this sectarianism drives many major conflicts. To name but the most obvious: Sunni Saudis v. Twelver Shi'i Iranians; Sunni Yemenis v. their Fiver Shi'i (Zaydi) countrymen; the Islamic State's Sunnis v. al-Asad's Alawis and Iraqis Twelver Shi`is; and across the Islamic world writ large, Salafi Sunnis v. the mystical Sufis of many orders. Second, both major sects of Islam allow Muslims, in effect, to lie to non-Muslims, under a doctrine known as kitman or taqiyya. This makes it rather difficult not only to vett Muslim refugees for terrorists in their midst, but to trust a nation-state like the Islamic Republic of Iran in the diplomatic realm. Finally, many if not most modern Muslims—both jihadist and peaceful—pine for the return of the caliphate, or one-man rule of the Islamic community. Should a more viable contender than ISIS's leader ever claim that position, it could prove a great boon, or a massive headache, for the rest of the world. The author holds a PhD in Islamic, African, and World history from The Ohio State University. He is a US Army veteran who served in the 101st Airborne Division as an Arabic interrogator, and afterwards worked as a college professor and consultant to US Special Operations Command. His other books are Holiest Wars: Islamic Mahdis, Their Jihads and Osama bin Ladin (2005) and the complementary volume to this work: Ten Years' Captivation with the Mahdi's Camps: Essays on Muslim Eschatology, 2005-2015 (2015).



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