



NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

THE PERSISTENCE OF ISLAMIST TERRORISM SINCE 1979

by

Naimat H. Virk

December 2017

Thesis Advisor:
Co-Advisor:

Mohammed Hafez
Afshon Ostovar

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY U.S.E ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE December 2017	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE THE PERSISTENCE OF ISLAMIST TERRORISM SINCE 1979			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Naimat H. Virk				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB number ____N/A____.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) The root causes of the persistence of Islamist terrorism from 1979 through the present age are many and complex. The choosing of a particular timeframe as a reference point indicates the political and religious dimensions of the thesis topic. The research topic is sensitive because of religious and political undertones, and any arbitrary assumptions could lead to the over-simplification of a complex problem. Terrorism in general and violence in the name of religion have serious repercussions for world peace, particularly in the Islamic world. U.S.- and Western-led overtly militarized foreign policies in the Islamic world have contributed to the structural deficiencies in the Islamic world by providing support to non-democratic and authoritarian regimes for strategic and short-term foreign policy goals. Radical Islamist ideology and its appeal in Muslim societies have found legitimacy through the misinterpreted context of the Qur'an and other texts. The constructivist interpretation of extremists of takfir, jihad, and martyrdom add to the prevailing chaos. The poor governance of authoritarian and non-democratic regimes has created social grievances in the Islamic world, which in turn have helped fuel extremism and terrorism. These factors provide an insight into the religious and political aspects behind the persistence of Islamist terrorism. No single factor can be attributed as the cause of terrorism; the enabling environment creates a sum total in which different stakeholders interpret the problem from their perspectives.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Islamist Terrorists, U.S.-led foreign policy, Salafi Creed, governance issues in Islamic World			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 77	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

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THE PERSISTENCE OF ISLAMIST TERRORISM SINCE 1979

Naimat H. Virk
Lieutenant Colonel, Pakistan Army
M.A., Balochistan University, 2010

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(COMBATING TERRORISM: POLICY AND STRATEGY)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
December 2017**

Approved by: Mohammed M. Hafez, Ph.D.
Thesis Advisor

Afshon Ostovar, Ph.D.
Co-Advisor

Mohammed M. Hafez, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of National Security Affairs

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ABSTRACT

The root causes of the persistence of Islamist terrorism from 1979 through the present age are many and complex. The choosing of a particular timeframe as a reference point indicates the political and religious dimensions of the thesis topic. The research topic is sensitive because of religious and political undertones, and any arbitrary assumptions could lead to the over-simplification of a complex problem. Terrorism in general and violence in the name of religion have serious repercussions for world peace, particularly in the Islamic world. U.S.- and Western-led overtly militarized foreign policies in the Islamic world have contributed to the structural deficiencies in the Islamic world by providing support to non-democratic and authoritarian regimes for strategic and short-term foreign policy goals. Radical Islamist ideology and its appeal in Muslim societies have found legitimacy through the misinterpreted context of the Qur'an and other texts. The constructivist interpretation of extremists of takfir, jihad, and martyrdom add to the prevailing chaos. The poor governance of authoritarian and non-democratic regimes has created social grievances in the Islamic world, which in turn have helped fuel extremism and terrorism. These factors provide an insight into the religious and political aspects behind the persistence of Islamist terrorism. No single factor can be attributed as the cause of terrorism; the enabling environment creates a sum total in which different stakeholders interpret the problem from their perspectives.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people deserve my appreciation, without whom this thesis research would not have been concluded. First, I am grateful to my advisors, Professor Mohammad M. Hafez and Afshon Ostovar, who continuously guided me through the course of this research. They helped me refine my concept of a challenging topic and then navigated me through the process of completion through their expert guidance. I thank my wife and both my daughters for their help, perseverance, and unwavering support, without whom this arduous task may not have been completed. I give much praise to my father, who is my ideological mentor and who has always inspired me to advance my studies. I also would like to thank Rebecca for her support in completing the technical details of the thesis.

I hope this thesis finds its way to those policy makers around the world who help to tackle this difficult subject.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is a defining phenomenon of our age. Terrorism is a complex, politicized, and controversial spectacle.¹ It has affected every single aspect of those societies where the terrorism problem is pronounced.² Different regions and countries have experienced waves of terrorism with varying intensity.³ Many studies have appeared in the recent past to inquire about the root causes of Islamist terrorism but with inconclusive answers.⁴

It may not be very convenient to define a timeline for Islamist terrorism to be an epoch-making event. September 11 (9/11) seems to be an automatic event to start the story of Islamist terrorism. It was an unprecedented event, but also a continuum of terrorism. The year 1979, is much more significant in the history of modern Islamist terrorism, ironically not for terrorist incidents but for two major geo-strategic events: Iran's Islamic revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.⁵ These two events led to re-emergence and shifted the dynamics of terrorism for politico-religious reasons.

One may argue that there are various root causes of Islamist terrorism. The causes may be ideological; religious; militarized U.S. and Western policies across the Muslim world; political marginalization; lack of democratic institutions; failure to establish a socio-economic contract between the state and the society; absence of good governance; economic deprivation, to name a few.⁶ These factors can be grouped into three broad

¹ Edwin Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies: Comparing Theory and Practice* (Leiden University Press, 2015), 19.

² John Mueller and Mark G. Stewart, *Chasing Ghosts: The Policing of Terrorism* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 275.

³ Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies*, 22,77

⁴ Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog, *Engineers of Jihad: The Curious Connection between Violent Extremism and Education* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), xi.

⁵ Jason Burke, *The New Threat: The Past, Present, and Future of Islamic Militancy* (New York: The New Press, 2015), 35.

⁶ Joshua Sinai, "Resolving A Terrorist Insurgency by Addressing Its Root Causes," Analysis Cooperation, http://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-0-387-71613-8_5.pdf

categories: political, social, and economic causes.⁷ The wave of Islamist terrorism is not dissipating despite the great effort in terms of money and resources; both physical and intellectual, by the United States, European powers, the Islamic world, and Islamic scholars, but have not been able to change the pattern of increased Islamist terrorism.⁸ Despite massive investment, terrorism is not only enduring but spreading. This brings us to our primary question: why has Islamist terrorism persisted since 1979 despite major efforts to combat it?

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis will analyze why, despite four decades of efforts by the U.S. and its allies to fight Islamist terrorism, such efforts have managed to yield very little, if any, positive results and have been unable to stop the onslaught of Islamist terrorism. Thus, this thesis will examine the root causes of Islamist terrorism to help explain why it has continued to grow and persist since 1979.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The most important reason to undertake this study is the profound impact Islamist terrorism has had around the world, and in the Islamic world in particular. Islamist terrorism is a strategic threat that has challenged the prevailing socio-political structure including non-Islamic countries.⁹ The issue of Islamist terrorism is also complex as the very definition of terrorism is viewed differently by various scholars. It is a contested concept having nonlinear views at tangent to each other.¹⁰

The issue of Islamist terrorism is further compounded by the fact that certain conflicts such as the Arab-Israeli; the Pakistani and Indian dispute over Kashmir; and some Islamic countries view foreign occupation as an instrument of state terrorism and

⁷ Thomas Riegler, "Addressing Root-Causes: The Example of Bruno Kreisky and Austria's Confrontation of Middle Eastern Terrorism," *Perspectives on Terror: Journal of the Terrorism Research Initiative* 5, no.2, 2011.

⁸ Burke, *The New Threat*, 6; also Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies*, 21.

⁹ Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies*, 21.

¹⁰ A. P. Schmid, "Terrorism-The Definitional problem," *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, 36, no. 2-3, 375-419.

consequently; resistance for self-determination may resort to justifiable resort to violence.¹¹ These states insist on acceptance of legal term of state terrorism to legitimize the right of self-determination.

It may be very convenient to label Islam as a religion to be the sole culprit of Islamist terrorism.¹² However, this would oversimplify a complex problem. Terms like “radical Islam” and “clash of civilizations” have further polarized the debate and undermined analysis of the root causes of Islamist terrorism.¹³ Post 9/11 studies have used too narrow a lens to label the Salafi creed of Islam as the flag bearer of terrorism.¹⁴ The U.S. and West-led militarized foreign policy objectives¹⁵ may find some credence in the Islamic world for terrorism, but it may be at the cost of inner reflection for socio-political problems and resultant relative deprivation within the Islamic world in particular and marginalization of Muslim immigrants in the U.S. and the West in general.¹⁶ Islamist terrorism is interpreted or defined as radical or Salafi creed of Islam.¹⁷ Time and policy objectives to combat and eradicate Islamist terrorism have shown that it is not a monolith, which adds to the significance of the study to explore the inherent intricacies in the persistence of Islamist terrorism.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a broad literature available on the root causes of Islamist terrorism. In my preliminary thesis research work, I have made an attempt to review a wide array of scholarly literature, think tank reports, and academic journals to lend currency to the

¹¹ Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies*, 21.

¹² Burke, *The New Threat*, 10-11.

¹³ Fareed Zakaria, “The End of the End of History,” *Newsweek*, 24 September 2001. See also: Christopher Allen, Justifying Islamophobia: A Post-9/11 Consideration of the European Union and British Contexts,” in *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 2004, 21:3, 1–25.

¹⁴ Rik Coolsaet, *Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters Wave: What Drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case* (Brussels: Egmont—The Royal Institute for International Relations), 13.

¹⁵ Mueller and Stewart, *Chasing Ghosts: The Policing of Terrorism*, 36.

¹⁶ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 95.

¹⁷ Lyons-Padilla, S., Gelfand, M.J., “Belonging Nowhere: Marginalization and Radicalization risk among Muslim immigrants,” *Behavioral Science and Policy*, 1(2), 1–12.

research question. The topic has a specific religious identity attached to it, and is therefore contentious. A deliberate attempt has been made to review the academic work from Islamic scholars as well as from American and Western academics on this topic.

This literature review will discuss three schools of thought and attempts to answer the question proposed earlier. The first school emphasizes strategic factors for the persistence of Islamist terrorism. The second school emphasizes on ideological factors like appeal of Islamist ideology and particularly its most extremist version. The third school of thought points to structural, political, economic and institutional variables within Islamic countries as primary contributing factors.

The first school of thought highlights the strategic factors which are fundamental to Islamist terrorism. These factors are policy objectives of international power politics of Western countries as well as conflicts within and between Muslim countries. Many scholars, politicians,¹⁸ and academics have pointed out that Islamist terrorism is anti-Western.¹⁹ Walid Phares, who has authored books on jihadists and jihadism subscribed to this point of view.²⁰ Martha Crenshaw also points towards Islamist terrorism's anti-western patterns.²¹ Samuel Huntington in his 'Clash of Civilizations' also tend to contribute to the narrative of struggle between Christianity and Islam.²² Osama bin Laden's fatwa²³ in 1998 or Boko Haram's beliefs²⁴ and most other Islamist terrorist organizations around the world tend to feed on similar anti-Western feelings.²⁵

¹⁸ Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies*, 123.

¹⁹ Ibid., 122-127.

²⁰ Ibid., 123.

²¹ Martha Crenshaw, "The Psychology of Terrorism: An Agenda for the 21st Century," *Political Psychology*, 21, no. 2 (June 2000): 405–420.

²² Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies: Comparing Theory and Practice*, 125.

²³ Ibid., 125; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 225.

²⁴ Abdulkareem Mohammed, *Paradox of Boko Haram* (Nigeria: Moving Image), 40–48.

²⁵ Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies*, 123.

Marc Sageman argues that “radicalization primarily occurs due to perceived injustices against one’s group.”²⁶ The U.S. image in Islamic world has been seriously dented over the decades. Its support for Israel, the Iraq invasion in 2003, and the subsequent management of war in Iraq served to malign the U.S. image.²⁷ The U.S. State Department conducted a survey of six Arab countries found that anti-Americanism is due to its regional policies and not the U.S. values.²⁸ The desire in Islamic world to protect itself from the U.S. policies in the Middle East gives support to the argument of U.S. led, biased policies against Islamic World.²⁹ The regional wars, ideological disputes within the Islamic world, and Osama bin Laden also propagated the same theme and accused the U.S. instead of himself starting this war. The rise of social media has increased the audience; it also has contributed to anti-Western sentiments in Islamic world.³⁰

Islamist intellectuals often point to the torture of Muslims and the occupation of Muslim lands by U.S. and British forces as a root cause of Islamist terrorism.³¹ As author Coolsaet argues that “Western military interventions, themselves determined by international power policies, in the Islamic world strengthen the jihadi narrative of Muslim victimhood and Western aggression.”³² The U.S. drone strikes in Afghanistan and Pakistan

²⁶ Mueller and Stewart *Chasing Ghosts: The Policing of Terrorism*, 36.

²⁷ Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson, eds. *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past* (Washington, DC: Endowment of the United States Institute of Peace, 2007), 592.

²⁸ Ibid., 593.

²⁹ Mueller and Stewart *Chasing Ghosts: The Policing of Terrorism*, 36; see also Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* (New York: Oxford University Press), 153–157; Stephen M. Walt, “Why They Hate Us (I): On Military Occupation,” *Foreign Policy*, November 23, 2009; Peter Bergen, “Five Myths About Osama bin Laden,” *Washington Post*, May 6, 2011, opinion; James Fallows, “Blind into Baghdad,” *Atlantic* (January/February 2004): 142; Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 72–82; John J. Mearsheimer, “Imperial by Design,” *National Interest* (January-February 2011), Mark Sageman has provided an arresting comparison with Jewish youths who felt called upon to go abroad to fight for besieged Israel in wars in 1948, 1967, and 1973: *Leaderless Jihad*, 74–75. On the religion issue, see also Faiza Patel, *Rethinking Radicalization* (New York: Brennan Center for Justice), 10, 13, 29; Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 76–79.

³⁰ Burke, *The New Threat*, 22.

³¹ Mueller and Stewart, *Chasing Ghosts: The Policing of Terrorism*, 36. See also “Under Fire,” 60 Minutes Video, November 2, 2014.

³² Rik Coolsaet, ed., “Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalization Challenge,” *European and American Experiences* 2nd. ed. (Taylor & Francis: Florence, KY), 64.

and around the world is also a prime motivator for many terrorists.³³ Militarized U.S. and Western-led policies and retaliations to terrorist actions around the world like Libyan bombing in 1986 as a reaction to terrorist incident in Berlin discotheque, the bombing of Afghanistan in 1998 as retaliation to two U.S. embassies in Africa, and the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Libya add to the narrative of the U.S. and West militarized actions in Islamic world as the primary fuel for anti-Western rhetoric and political violence.³⁴

Islamist terrorism is not merely anti-Western because in recent times some related incidents have occurred in Islamic countries. According to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD)/National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) in 2013, 57% of the worldwide casualties and two thirds of these fatalities (66%) occurred in three countries alone, namely, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Islamist terrorism is also sectarian in its nature, especially in Iraq (post 2003), besides targeting U.S. forces.³⁵

These Western-led policies provide logic and establish a causal relationship between the policies and perceived misgivings that are played by different political opponents as well as diaspora of dissenting groups of people in societies within Islamic world. Western response views Islamism as a hostile political ideology, but many Muslims view Islamism as authentic expression of their aspirations. This disconnect has led western governments to continue their support for secular leadership, allowing Islamist radicals to thrive. Western response to 9/11 has been overly militarized, relying on invasions, drones, and extra-legal measures (extraordinary renditions, “enhanced interrogations”). Rather than winning the high moral ground against the terrorists, western states descended to their level. This allows extremists to perpetuate themselves. Western strategy towards democratic reforms have been shortsighted, as democratic transitions require patience and long-term vision. So, when earlier attempts at political reforms led to Islamist victories, western states backed away from democratization. Invasion of Iraq was a direct cause of perpetuating terrorism by allowing AQ to reconstitute itself in the Arab world.

³³ Mueller and Stewart, *Chasing Ghosts: The Policing of Terrorism*, 36.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Global Terrorism Database, 2014, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/about>.

The second school of thought emphasizes ideological factors. These ideological factors are related to diversified and often misperceived interpretation of Islam by different sections of Islamic society. Anti-Western may not be conveniently labeled as the primary driver and motivating factor of Islamist terrorism. A certain creed of Islamic Ideology, namely Salafi school of thought has been dubbed as primary motivator for Islamist terrorism.

The contemporary Salafist movement as explained by Esposito emerged in late 1800s and reflected on its earliest leaders, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Mohammad Abduh's writings.³⁶ Both advocated reinterpretation of Islam and the importance of reason in understanding the original intent of Islamic teachings. The writings of Rashid Rida were more radical and opposed the use of reason in religion.³⁷ In the Arabian Peninsula, the teachings of Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab were conservative, puritanical and intolerant.³⁸ Saudi Arabia as a state, choose to follow Wahhabism as the state's official interpretation of Islam. The Saudi state's global exportation of Wahhabism later proved inimical after Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. This helped in exporting Wahhabist Salafism to other parts of Islamic world in response to Iranian Revolution.

Quintan Wiktorowicz explains different factions in Salafist movement as "purists, politicos, and jihadis."³⁹ "Purists" believed in nonviolent means of leading by example and learning to purify the people, "politicos" believed in political process to cleanse the society and "jihadis" interpret violence to impose their belief.⁴⁰ Even the literal meaning of word Jihad is "striving" which is misinterpreted as "Holy War" only.⁴¹ Al-Qaeda is a strong proponent of Jihadi creed of Salafist interpretation.⁴²

³⁶ John Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 148–54.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Burke, *The New Threat*, 42–43.

³⁹ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006): 208, http://www.cerium.ca/IMG/pdf/wiktorowicz_2006_Anatomy_of_the_Salafi_Movement.pdf.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 81.

⁴² William McCants, Executive Summary, *Militant Ideology Atlas* (West Point, NY: Combatting Terrorism Center), 9.

Islamic scholars like Abd al-Salam Faraj was the exponent of Jihad as a means to use physical force, if required, in contradiction of all opinions, ideological dogmas, and political institutions which are not sanctioned by Islam.⁴³ Burke also shares the same ideas that writings of Farraj (The Neglected Obligation), Syed Qutb (Milestones), and Azzam (Defending the lands of the Muslims is each man's most important duty) profess violent interpretation of Salafists.⁴⁴ Byman also believes that for large majority of Salafists believe in interpretation of Jihad which does not involve taking violent means.⁴⁵ He explains that Salafists believe that teachings of Sayyid Qutab who is an advocate of political role of religion as opposed to religious reformation.

Wahhabi Salafists treat Shi'ism as a deviation and threat to Islam.⁴⁶ These teachings are directly influenced by the 13th century work of Ibn Taymiyya and other medieval Hanbali scholars. Some Islamist groups interpretation of "Takfir" is also a violent interpretation of purity in Salafi creed.⁴⁷ Takfir is affirming a government or an individual to be a nonbeliever which is one of the most extreme form of Jihadis and reason for sectarian terrorism.⁴⁸

Growing incidents of homegrown Islamist terrorists in the United States and Europe are adding new dimensions to inquire the root causes of Islamist terrorism. In case of terrorists who are immigrants and Muslims, their cultural identity who feel marginalized and discriminated and consequent significance loss. These individuals tend to tilt towards extremist ideology.⁴⁹

⁴³ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 151.

⁴⁴ Burke, *The New Threat*, 38–39.

⁴⁵ Daniel Byman, *The Five Front War: The Better Way to Fight Global Jihad* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008), 79–80.

⁴⁶ Guido Steinberg, "Jihadi Salafism and the Shi'is: Remarks about the about the Intellectual Roots of anti-Shi'ism," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 107–8, 114–15; Christopher Blanchard, *Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology*, CRS Report No. RL32759 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2007), 8.

⁴⁷ Gambetta and Hertog, *Engineers of Jihad*, 131.

⁴⁸ Byman, *The Five Front War: The Better Way to Fight Global Jihad*, 40–41.

⁴⁹ S. Lyons-Padilla, M. J. Gelfand, H. Farooq Mirahmadi, and M. van Egmond, "Belonging Nowhere: Marginalization and Radicalization Risk among Muslim immigrants," *Behavioral Science and Policy* (2015), 1(2), 1–12.

These diversified interpretations of Salafi creed lead to confusion amongst Muslim youth and create space for Islamists terrorists to mold them as per their own misguided and disenfranchised motivations. Terrorist organizations are astute ideological actors who know how to appeal to their societies. They have developed coherent ideology to sell their interpretation of religion to garner support and cultivate younger Muslim generation to their folds.

Third school of thought stresses the structural, political, and institutional variables within Islamic world are also partly, the result of U.S. and Western states support to these regimes/governments. The U.S. and Western states lend support to Islamic countries having authoritarian, repressive, inefficient and poor governance governments for their strategic and at times short term policy objectives. This support partly contributes to these deficiencies in the Muslim World, such as socio-economic weakness, authoritarian political institutions, lack or absence of social contract between the state and the society, structural deficiencies, injustice in society due to lack of governance maybe some of the root causes of persistence of Islamist terrorism.

Scholars like Mia Bloom and Horne believe that leaders who are responsible for governance of their respective countries and their failure in governance results in poverty and lack of education which becomes a reason for terrorism. They cite example of Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres who also blamed poverty, lack of education, and ignorance being reason of terrorism.⁵⁰ Desmond Tutu also stressed on the causal relationship of terrorism to poverty, disease and ignorance.⁵¹ Joshua Sinai⁵² and Thomas Riegler⁵³ argue that lack of education, poor economic circumstances and social discontent are the root

⁵⁰ Mia. Bloom and C. D. Horne, "Is Terrorism the Poor Man's Patent? Evaluating the Causal Connection between Education, Poverty, and Political Violence" Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the ISA's 50th Annual Convention "Exploring the Past. Anticipating the Future," New York, February 15, 2009.

⁵¹ Bakker, "Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies: Comparing Theory and Practice," 109.

⁵² Sinai, "Resolving a Terrorist Insurgency by Addressing Its Root Causes."

⁵³ Riegler, "Addressing Root-Causes: The Example of Bruno Kreisky and Austria's Confrontation of Middle Eastern Terrorism."

causes of terrorism. Wiktorowicz⁵⁴ and Hertog⁵⁵ have also shared the concerns that poverty, blocked social mobility and economic malaise are root causes of terrorism.

Diego Gambetta, Steffen Hertog,⁵⁶ and Gilles Kepel⁵⁷ think that the governance deficiencies in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) resulted in widening gap of unequal income distribution and lack of opportunities have shown signs of discontent in the societies. Stagnation of economies resulted in undeveloped advanced industries and technological capacities resulted in poor economic performances and rise of militant Islamic groups. Byman⁵⁸ and Ted Gurr⁵⁹ emphasized on democratic values tied with economic development can transform Islamic world which can help in reducing terrorism. These enabling environmental aspects within the Islamic world provide fertile grounds to dissenting population and add fuel to the fire.

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Based on these arguments following three hypotheses appear to explain the root causes of persistence of Islamist terrorism despite combating for four decades.

(1) H I: Militarized policies of Western states against Islamic world in fighting Terrorism.

U.S. and western led militarized policies in Islamic world fuel the sentiments of Muslims around the world against the West and perceived allies of the West. This hypothesis will test the validity of this argument.

⁵⁴ Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

⁵⁵ Hertog Steffen. 2009. "Alan B. Krueger: What Makes a Terrorist? Economics and the Roots of Terrorism." *European Sociological Review* 26 (2), 253–58.

⁵⁶ Gambetta and Hertog, *Engineers of Jihad*, 35–42.

⁵⁷ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (I.B. Tauris, 2002).

⁵⁸ Byman, *The Five Front War: The Better Way to fight Global Jihad*, 79–80.

⁵⁹ Ted Robert Gurr, "Terrorism in Democracies: Its Social and Political Bases," in Walter Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, and States of Mind* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Press, 1990), 87–98.

(2) H 2: Radical Islamist ideology and its appeal in Muslim societies.

Scholars have difference of opinion as regards the radical nature of Salafist creed of interpretation, however, violent nature of its manifestation has found legitimacy in some sections of society and terrorist organizations have used this ideology to justify their actions. This hypothesis will test the authenticity of this argument with historical evidence.

(3) H 3: Governance deficiencies in the Muslim World, such as socio-economic weakness and authoritarian political institutions, keep reproducing militant tendencies.

This hypothesis will test set of structural deficiencies in governance and socio-economic impact on Muslim society due to authoritarian political institutions, keep reproducing violent tendencies.

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

The methodology employed in this research paper is a combination of analytic approaches to inquire the primary research question. A specific case study is not used to explain the complexity and vastness of the subject. A historical, historiographical, comparative, and qualitative approach is adopted to analyze the persistence of Islamist terrorism in the world. It establishes the ground by taking set of events in a specific timeline to illustrate the circumstances which created an enabling environment of persistence of Islamist terrorism. It will use empirical data to support the argument and test the validity of hypotheses.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis has five chapters. The first chapter sets the tone by giving an introduction of the different aspects of the research question and contains the literature review.

Chapter II will discuss about the impact of U.S. and Western led militarized policies in the Islamic world and its impact on the perception and image of Western countries to resolve the issue.

Chapter III will throw light on the radical ideology of Salafist creed with historical evidence to test the hypothesis of its appeal in the Muslim societies.

Chapter IV will explain the deficiencies of governance in Islamic world to test the hypothesis that Muslim societies keep reproducing violent tendencies.

Chapter V will give way forward to combat the issue with viable recommendations for all stakeholders to resolve the issue.

II. STRUCTURAL DRIVERS OF PERSISTENT TERRORISM: U.S. POLICIES

In this chapter, I analyze the geopolitical and geostrategic aspects of U.S. policies in the Islamic world and consequently its effects and resultant outcomes.⁶⁰ It will establish causal relationship between militarized foreign policy objectives and proximate cause, and justification of persistence of Islamist terrorism.⁶¹ Foreign policy objectives of the West may be contributor to disillusionment, grievance, misperception, and becomes an enabler tool in the hands of terrorist organizations for recruitment across the globe in Muslim world.⁶² Western overtly militarized policies, persistent occupation of Islamic countries, support of authoritarian regimes, support of non-state actors are some of the policies which contributed to the negative perception of U.S. and western countries in Islamic world.

This chapter will also look to consistently inconsistent West led policies in Islamic world, like supporting military dictators, theological states, totalitarian regimes in different countries of Islamic world on the pretext of perceived national interests on one hand and championing democracy on the other hand. Western led and supported secular leadership in Islamic world who was oppressive in handling their population vis a vis supporting non-state actors like freedom fighters (Afghan holy fighters in 1980s) and other groups with violent means attending their goals as well as Western led goals contributes to negative perception of Western hypocritical double standards. Declining

⁶⁰ Definition of the West in this thesis refers to Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. The term is understood in historical (colonialism) and geographical context and not the culture of liberal democracy, consumerism, free markets which have become truly globalized and not restricted to West only.

⁶¹ The term Islamist in this thesis is for the one who conforms to political movement that favors society and government in accordance with Islamic law. They may form political parties and very few (small minority) out of them subscribe to violent means to achieve their goals. Only small number of Islamists turn to terrorism. Term Islamism is not synonymous to terrorism or religion Islam. Terrorism and violence is understood to refer to views and activities of terrorism by individuals, groups and organizations who claim to conduct and believe who is a real Muslim and who is not on other Muslims, a concept that is antithetical to mainstream Islam and is a marginal heterodoxy.

⁶² The term Muslim or Islamic world (interchangeably) in this thesis is used for more than fifty Muslim states and diaspora of Islamic faith across the globe with 1.4 billion population. The term explains the diversity, color, race, thought and interpretation of Islam as a universal code of conduct and not the religiosity of faith.

right of self-determination and labelling of freedom fighters as terrorists also speak of double standards. This short-term marriage of convenience and expediency rather than long term consistent policies with enduring outcomes will also be analyzed in this chapter.

A. GENESIS OF ISLAMIST TERRORISM

Islamist terrorism was an unknown occurrence half a century ago. Then how could it emerge in last four decades with such devastation and ferocity? The West interventionist policies in the Islamic World may be a potential explanation. If Islamist terrorism was rooted in religious, social and cultural domains, then Islamist terrorism would have been thriving before that period. Western imperialism was present in preceding two-three centuries in annexing Muslim lands and overthrowing Islamic dynasties in many regions of the world like South Asia, North Africa, and East Asia. The Islamist terrorism phenomena should have had its roots in those times. But the facts are contrary to that. The answer lies in the combination of interventionist policies, creation of Israel and unprecedented support to unabated Israeli state terrorism in the name of self-defense against Palestinian population, and arming Islamist ideology to Mujahedeen during Afghan war to defeat Soviet Union. The birth and persistence of Islamist terrorism may be an outcome of these factors and policy objectives of the West.

Year 1979, is regarded by the author as an important milestone of persistence of Islamist terrorism to present day. Iran's Islamic Revolution, anti-American fervor and its policies gave life in the form of Iran-Iraq war and U.S. support to Saddam during the war. The Afghan war provided the ideology to Afghans, Arabs and Muslims around the world, armed with skills and military training. This gave Mujahedeen, the confidence of humbling a super power through the amalgam of ideology, religion and militaristic reality of achieving the politico-military goals. The genie was out of the bottle, a myth becoming a reality.

“Terrorism is not rooted in insanity or religion; it’s rooted in geopolitics.”⁶³ If this line of argument is extended further than it implies that geopolitical actions and policies of the West are the ones which are creating and persisting Islamist terrorism. Consequently, its solution also lies in geopolitics. Terrorism is the tool of the weak and may be the only option available to the Islamist terrorists. The wars in the Middle East, including, conflicts between Muslim countries are contributing to persistence and morphing of terror. Most, if not all terrorist incidents in the West; cities, embassies, symbols, and personnel are reflection/signature of the Western interventionist militarized policies in Muslim world in general and Middle East in particular.⁶⁴ These terrorist retaliations are not justified but do provide reasons to terrorists to wage the war of ideas from their perspective.

Without lurching into centuries of conflict and crusades between Islamic world and the rest; narrow focused, unilateral, and interest driven policies in dealing with Muslim world affairs since and including fall of Ottoman empire, is a rule and not exception by the Western powers. After second World War British exit from the Middle East, forced America to fill-in the British management of the region. North Africa was left entirely to France. U.S. handling of affairs in the region was a mix of realism and idealism. U.S. interests at various stages necessitated alliances and policies that alienate Muslims. For example, U.S. interest in supporting Israel alienated many Arab nationalists. U.S. anti-Soviet containment strategy priorities and fighting communism over supporting democratic institutions. The motives range from controlling resources, guaranteeing access to oil, Israel’s security, geopolitical competition, sea routes, and supporting authoritarian as well as moderate regimes against revolutionary regimes to name a few. But the overall aim of these policies was a realist approach to foreign policy as opposed to idealistic values of American foreign policy. The realist approach gives an impression of an imperial power that acts without regard to consequences to the recipient, and only cares to serve its own interest. This becomes a caricature of U.S. foreign policy.

⁶³ Jeffrey D. Sachs, “Opinion: How the West Fuels the War With Radical Islam,” MarketWatch, January 16, 2015, <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/how-the-west-fuels-the-war-with-radical-islam-2015-01-15>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

These policies are direct, problematic, politically divisive, overwhelmingly militaristic, fatal as well as traumatic for Islamic world in general and Middle East in particular.

B. U.S. FOREIGN POLICY SINCE WW II

U.S. foreign policy since WW II remained in a state of ambivalence towards Middle east. The pendulum of struggle between realists' policy of national interest and idealists' policy of higher values of its people, kept oscillating between two extremes. These U.S. policies were not mere meddling or hostility towards Muslims as much as they reflected American realism and strategic priorities.⁶⁵ Every country has its share of inconsistencies, and America is no different. But it is the oscillation of these foreign policy objectives of super power, which have far more unintended consequences. America's realism in foreign policy conflicted with the idealism of American democracy and liberties, which contributed to perceptions of hypocrisy.

The covert and overt actions by the West like King Farouk (Egypt) and Shukri al-Quwatli (Syria) was the reason for creation of Baath parties in the region. Mossadegh's overthrow led to Shah's dictatorship (a close U.S. ally) in Iran which was the precursor of present day theological Iranian Islamic Republic. Saddam (a dictator) was supported for a decade against Iranian theocracy, who was responsible for Kuwait fiasco and resultant Gulf War in 1991. Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda made foreign (Western) states presence of forces in Saudi Arabia as their ideological motivation. The support for Afghan Mujahedeen against Soviets and communism led to creation of Taliban and eventually 9/11 attacks. U.S. decision to invade Iraq in 2003 was responsible for creation of present day ISIS. The support of non-state actors by arming them against Bashar Al Assad in Syria, and resultant refugee crisis for Europe and Arab neighbors is an unending plight for Muslims around the world to endure and spectacle to those who are at least not directly affected.

The narration of above mentioned events may seem cyclic and rhetoric, but did result in unintended consequences by the Western led policies, and its impact on the Muslim world in terms of perception and disillusionment is immense. Covert actions

⁶⁵ Haviland Smith, "Idealist vs. Realist Foreign Policy," *American Diplomacy*, April 2011.

occasionally may lead to misperception, but overt actions and policies are very difficult to be perceived or digested as optimistic view of West's policies. It is these militarized foreign policy objectives which create enabling environment for terrorists to fuel sentiments which result in terrorism against Western targets and their allies in Muslim world, governments and leadership alike.

The attacks on American targets like Lebanon in 1983, terrorist incident in Berlin discotheque in 1986, killing of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia in 1995/1996, U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and U.S.S Cole bombing in Yemen, all happened before 9/11.⁶⁶ The logic of foreign occupation of Islamic countries (Afghanistan and Iraq) leading to terrorist actions against U.S. may not hold good on these events. World Trade Center bombing in 1993 being the only Islamist terrorism act on U.S. soil prior to 9/11. These events were few considering the time span, frequency and scale of casualties. If we plot the dots they will lead to 9/11 and beyond. The foreign occupation of two Islamic countries since 9/11 lead to an exponential increase in Islamist terrorism not only of U.S. targets worldwide but in Europe and entire Muslim world itself. Between 1980 and 2003, out of 343 incidents of suicide bombing only ten percent were anti-American inspired. Since 2004, 91 % of those incidents have been anti-American.⁶⁷ This surge of terrorism has been direct result of America's direct military interventions in these Islamic countries.

The Afghanistan campaign in retaliation to 9/11 may seem a logical, legitimate (U.S. and allies' perspective), and knee jerk reaction to the unfortunate and brutal terrorist attacks. The Muslim world response was equally understandable of U.S. reaction. There is no moral justification for killing noncombatants on any pretext, no matter how heinous may be the grievances or cause. Overly militarized response to 9/11 led U.S. to lose the moral high ground and descended to terrorists' level. This also left U.S. to deal with non-state actors in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. This kinetic strategy adopted by U.S. failed to stem the tide and saw a remarkable surge in rebel

⁶⁶ Robert A Pape, "It's the Occupation, Stupid," *Foreign Policy*, October 18, 2010, 2.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

ideology and laid the playing field for extremist organizations recruitment bonanza truly global.⁶⁸ Over the years since 9/11 it has become evident that international efforts by U.S. and its allies have not only failed to combat terrorism but has seen an upward trend.⁶⁹

Another fallout of militarized policy is the adoption of same policy by many Middle Eastern countries in regional conflicts on the pretext of war on terrorism. Saudi campaign in Yemen, Jordan's bombing of ISIS in Syria, and Egyptian air raids in Libya are cases in point.⁷⁰ The actions of these regimes being a U.S. ally fit into narrative of terrorist organizations. This overly militarized policy resulted in unification of violent, extremist and terrorist organizations global agenda.⁷¹ U.S. counterterrorism policies and strategies in Global war on terror (GWOT) has shown that over reliance on military repression and state coercion has failed to stop the mushrooming of global terrorist ideology. Military actions have reduced public support and has proved counterproductive against terrorists' recruitment narrative.

The Iraqi invasion in 2003, without UN authorization on the pretexts of linkage between Al-Qaeda/Saddam Hossain and WMD program were too arrogant to be absorbed by Muslim world.⁷² UN weapons inspectors report also confirmed that WMDs were destroyed after first Gulf War in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions.⁷³ Despite Saddam Hossain repressive policies in Iraq against own population, and contrary to the U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney's (2003) claim, nationwide polls in Iraq showed 71% of U.S. troops as occupiers and not liberators.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Brynjar Lia, "Jihadism in the Arab World after 2011: Explaining Its Expansion," *Middle East Policy*, 23, no.4, Winter 2016

⁶⁹ Hassan Hassan, "Washington's War on the Islamic State Is Making It Stronger," *Foreign Policy*, June 16, 2016

⁷⁰ Lia, "Jihadism in the Arab World after 2011."

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Garry Leech, "Islamic Extremism Is a Product of Western Imperialism," *Counterpunch Magazine*, March 30, 2016, 8–9.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

The prolonged occupation of Afghanistan even after Iraq invasion was not enough, bombing of Gaddafi's Libya in 2011 and support of non-state actors in Syria, and Syrian population paying the price of these policies helped ISIS establish its hold over these territories. U.S. direct interventionist policies can be categorized in three different categories. Interventions that really enraged Muslim populations (invasion of Iraq). Interventions that don't necessarily enrage Muslims, but they nonetheless create environments conducive to extremism because they weaken security sector (Libya 2011). Interventions where the U.S. was ineffective in shaping the political trajectory of a conflict (Syria in 2011-present). In the latter case, the inability of a superpower to shape conflict dynamics enables sub-state actors to fill in the gap. American departure from realism by promoting regime change in places like Iraq and Libya, was a disappointing outcome. As one expert put it, the U.S. can only transact in the Middle East, but it cannot transform it. This underpins the recurring cycle of grievances that creates a base of support for anti-American sentiment.

C. AMERICAN IMAGE IN ISLAMIC WORLD

American image in the Muslim world has seen a constant drop since 2002. In 2008, Annual Arab Public Opinion Poll showed 83 % unfavorability towards America and 70 % have no confidence in U.S. policies in the Islamic World.⁷⁵ Kuwait, which was liberated with U.S. help had 17% U.S. favorability, and 66 % view U.S. as unfavorable.⁷⁶ The disrespect of International law in invading Iraq on false pretexts, Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, torture of prisoners practices like waterboarding etc., rendition and overall conduct of the war, all have contributed to lowering of U.S. image worldwide and Muslim world in particular. The American war on terror globally, inadvertently perceived to be war against Islam and Muslims.⁷⁷ The Gallup World Poll survey of Islamic world showed that 93% of Muslims believed it to be unjustified, and only 7% thought it

⁷⁵ Shibley Telhami, "2008 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey," Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, February 2008, <http://sadat.umd.edu/surveys/index.htm>.

⁷⁶ Richard Burkholder, "Kuwaiti Impressions of U.S. Have Soured Since 2001" Gallup Poll, February 28, 2007 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/26728/kuwaiti-impressions-us-soured-since-2001.aspx>.

⁷⁷ John L. Esposito, *The War on Terrorism: Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University's Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding).

otherwise. The majority however, of 93% did not view U.S. favorably.⁷⁸ U.S. is not liked and trusted around the world in more than fifty years, especially its Muslim states allies.⁷⁹ The survey conducted by U.S. State Department of six Arab countries blamed U.S. policies in the region especially the prevalent perception of tilt towards Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and not against U.S. culture, society, religion, or specific media channels.⁸⁰ The primary motivator or root cause for terrorist organizations to inflame their hatred against the West is the occupation of Muslims land, and the torture of Muslims by foreign policies of governments like Britain and U.S.⁸¹

This brings another question that does hatred for West by Muslims is universal, baseless and biased towards religion, values or culture of Western world. Is it without any reason basing on misperceived notions fed by extremist views within Islamic world? U.S. President George Bush in his speech to Congress immediately after 9/11 sounded the same unfounded notion. His reference to hating American way of life, value, freedom and success by these terrorists was a reminder of the same chants in extremist views on other side of the aisle in Islamic world.⁸² This was a clear hint and indication of anti-Western agenda by terrorist's groups. But empirical data suggests that Islamic world is not against U.S. or Western culture, civilization or religious contrast but against its policies. In Gallup World poll, Muslims admiration for technology, political systems, value system, hard work, gender equality, democracy and human rights of the West are worth emulating.⁸³

⁷⁸ Burkholder, "Kuwaiti Impressions of U.S. Have Soured Since 2001."

⁷⁹ Art and Richardson, *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past*, 592; Stephen Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005).

⁸⁰ Art and Richardson, *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past*, 593

⁸¹ Mueller and Stewart, *Chasing Ghosts: The Policing of Terrorism*, 36.

⁸² Ted Galen Carpenter, *Moving Beyond Self-Serving Myths: Acknowledging the Principal Cause of Radical Islamic Terrorism* (Washington, DC: CATO Institute, December 14, 2015).

⁸³ Esposito, *The War on Terrorism*.

D. AL-QAEDA AND WAR AGAINST THE WEST

Al Qaeda is an international transnational organization that advocated Muslims around the world are under attack by the West and predominantly U.S. The only way to weaken and stopping West resolve in interfering in Muslim world, is by resorting to violent means to eject Western political, economic, military and cultural invasion. The prime motivating reason for Al Qaeda and its affiliates was that Islam and Muslims are under attack by a new wave of crusaders.⁸⁴ Osama Bin Laden in his fatwa in 1998 “Jihad against Jews and Crusaders” in which “World Islamic Front” commented as under:

the ruling to kill the Americans and their allies, civilian and military, is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it.⁸⁵

Other organizations like Boko Haram (The Congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad) which clearly states anti-Western views and believe that Western education is sin and any interaction with the West has to be discontinued.⁸⁶ The inflaming disregard for Western civilization and culture may be the reflection of Western media’s and academics portrayal of image of Islam as a religion, and Muslims as society and culture.⁸⁷ Similarly, many leaders and academia also perceive U.S. global hegemony of culture in the name of globalization.⁸⁸

But Osama bin Laden in his inclinations, precepts of Islam and achieving goals did not oppose or hold any grievance against Western society, culture and values. According to Peter Bergen, who wrote a book on bin Laden wrote candidly and explaining the root cause of bin Laden’s reservations:

⁸⁴ David Cook, *Understanding Jihad*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 135-137.

⁸⁵ Edwin Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies*, 123; Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 225.

⁸⁶ Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies*, 123; Haruna Mohammed, Paradox of Boko Haram, 40–48.

⁸⁷ Nasir Khan, “Islam in Western Mirror,” *Counter Currents*, May 19, 2007, <http://www.countercurrents.org/khan190507.htm>.

⁸⁸ Bruce Vaughn, *Islam in South and Southeast Asia* CRS Report No. RS21903 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, February 2005), 3.

In all the tens of thousands of words that bin Laden has uttered on the public record there are significant omissions: he does not rail against the pernicious effects of Hollywood ... and other vices. Nor does he inveigh against the drug and alcohol culture of the West, or its tolerance for homosexuals. He leaves that kind of material to the Christian fundamentalist Jerry Falwell, who opined that September 11 attacks were God's vengeance on Americans for condoning feminism and homosexuality.

If we judge his silence, bin Laden cares little about such cultural issues. What he condemns the United States for is simple: its policies in the Middle East. Those are, to recap briefly: the continued U.S. military presence in Arabia; U.S. support for Israel; its continued bombing of Iraq; and its support for regimes such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia that bin Laden regards as apostates from Islam.⁸⁹

The previous analyses conform to the narrative that it is not U.S. or Western world what it is rather than what it does? It is the same theme which is used by different terrorist organizations for recruitment.

The fact that the Islamist terrorist's attacks in the West have begun only a generation ago, is reflective of the fact that it is the blowback of these militarized foreign policy objectives of the West, or at least continuum of the Middle east wars. The extremists justify their actions, and typically give political reasons as opposed to religious or theological reasons. Times Square bomber (Faisal Shahzad), underwear bomber (Umar Farouk), or Boston marathon bomber (Tsarnaev) and many more responsible for Paris attacks all had political motivations for Western policies in Islamic world for their unjustified actions.⁹⁰

E. KINETIC OPTIONS OF COUNTER TERRORISM POLICY

Use of drones became a leading counter terrorism tool during Obama's presidency. Its use has aggravated the problem rather than curtailing it. Drone attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan and other Muslim countries caused collateral damage in which

⁸⁹ Peter Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 222

⁹⁰ Mehdi Hasan, "Extremists Point To Western Foreign Policy To Explain Their Acts. Why Do We Ignore Them?" *New Statesman Magazine*, May 30, 2013,

innocent civilians including women and children become the unintended victims.⁹¹ Leaving aside the legal, moral and ethical questions about international law, norms, and sovereignty; it undermines the fundamental rights of innocent victims, fuels terrorist ideology, and violent extremism. The civilian innocent casualties in these drone strikes are counterproductive as they become the breeding tool for propagandists to influence their audience that an unjust war is being waged against them in the name of terrorism. The word collateral damage is a cultured way of saying that innocent civilians have been killed. This is what drone strikes have been achieving.

Drone war look feasible from U.S. military perspective of no boots on the ground and resultant avoidance of casualties. They do achieve some tactical results in targeting high profile terrorists, but in the process, kill innocent civilians. Certainly, there could be short term military gains by killing terrorists but the long-term losses are much more damaging. The elimination of terrorists may be much less than the hatred it creates in the general population. The resentment in the countries where these drones have been used is much more important than killing some terrorists. Drone strikes cause more people hate America and join terrorist organizations not because of ideology rather than sheer sense of despair, revenge and retaliation. The relatives and friends of those innocent victims emerge as next generation of potential violent extremists.

In U.S. perspective, the drone campaign did achieve results in Pakistan.⁹² Seen from Pakistani perspective tactical advantage came at a cost of strategic disadvantage. Killing of high value targets like Pakistani Taliban leaders Baitullah Mehsud and Hakimullah Mehsud seem a tactical victory but the associated cost of these attacks in terms of legitimacy, territorial sovereignty and integrity is counterproductive. Pakistan who is a U.S. ally on war on terrorism, lands in very uncomfortable position in front of its own public about U.S. handling of bilateral ties. The terrorist groups in Pakistan bellicose strong anti-American resentment. Drones strikes justify their violence against Pakistani state as an appendage to Pakistan's support to American occupation in Afghanistan. This

⁹¹ Mueller and Stewart, *Chasing Ghosts: The Policing of Terrorism*, 36.

⁹² Michael V. Hayden, "To Keep America Safe, Embrace Drone Warfare, *New York Times*, February 19, 2016.

becomes a strategic failure for U.S. and Pakistan, who wants to increase its writ in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas adjoining Afghanistan to win popular support amongst tribal population.

The Afghan and Iraqi invasion also happened after 9/11, then why Islamist terrorism persisted before that? It is unqualified support for Israeli actions vis a vis Palestinian support beside continuation of interfering in Muslim world for last five decades.⁹³

F. ISRAEL FACTOR

Unquestioned support for Israel remains the cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy. The “Israeli Exceptionalism” of American policy is harbinger of Muslims distrust and double standards of American foreign policy objectives.⁹⁴ American uneven handedness of Israeli support in the light of domestic lobbies and policy is damaging for U.S. role as a trustworthy interlocutor. U.S. criticism for Israeli-Palestinian resort to violence and terror is not balanced. U.S. open ended and freelance support to Israeli excessive use of force against unarmed Palestinians cast a shadow on America’s role as intermediary in the conflict. Religion tends to create a shared identity which transcends race, color and geography. Muslims around the world in general and Arabs in particular see Israel’s support by U.S. as a constant reminder of anti-Islam policies against unarmed Palestinian population.

U.S. has clearly made a goal of Israel’s integration in Middle East as a fundamental foreign policy objective. But this goal is achieved at the expense of pacifying Palestinians and not leashing Israeli actions. This overt and explicit American actions have empowered extremist groups in Palestine and neighboring countries. The chaos which has been created since 2003 Iraqi invasion in Middle East has served Israeli interest more than any other country in the region. All or any of the country which possessed relative offensive posture towards Israel has been engulfed in internal strife and conflict. This has served as a powerful argument against America and the West in

⁹³ Hasan, *Extremists Point To Western Foreign Policy To Explain Their Acts*.

⁹⁴ Esposito, *The War on Terrorism*.

Muslim world. The Israeli-Palestinian road map for peaceful resolution of the conflict is marred by free hand to Israeli wars in Lebanon and Gaza.⁹⁵ Israel has always received U.S. support to brutally handle and maim Palestinian people to flagrantly violate international law. This unquestioned support to Israeli actions by U.S. has constantly fueled anti-Western feelings throughout the Middle East.

It took more than four decades of repressive Israeli occupation and expansion of Palestinian territory to invigorate suicide terrorism amongst moderate Palestinian population.⁹⁶ It was continuation of same policies which gave birth to Hamas in Occupied Territories during 1980s.⁹⁷ Hezbollah came into being in 1980s as a result of Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1980s with U.S. support. U.S. and Western assistance to Israel in 1956, 1967 and 1973 wars have continuously been taken as anti-Islam and anti-Arab by the Muslim world. Creation and support of a Jewish state in the heart of Arab world has constantly fed the perception of Muslim world as an attempt by the West to impose its will and continuation of anti-Islam agenda.

G. SUPPORT OF NON-DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS

U.S. credibility as a champion of democracy in the world gets serious dents when it comes to its relationship with the Muslim world. Its strong ties with monarchies, dictatorships and repressive authoritarian rulers/regimes have been a constant eerie in double standards of American foreign policy. This duplicitous American policy of supporting regimes with non-democratic credentials creates negative impression of U.S. ties with these governments. Arab population's major criticism of U.S. policies is the unwavering support for dictatorships like Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Morocco, Algeria and so on.⁹⁸ Whatever U.S. compulsions like, stability in the region, oil, support during cold war, and even tolerance of U.S. Israel's policy, the support for these regimes were at the cost of freedom for their population. Repression feeds extremism and chaos is

⁹⁵ Esposito, *The War on Terrorism*.

⁹⁶ Leech, "Islamic Extremism is a product of Western Imperialism," 8–9.

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Smith, "Idealist vs. Realist Foreign Policy," *American Diplomacy*, April 2011.

the enemy of democracy. The population in these countries turned against their own governments and resulted in Arab Spring scenarios, a rudderless ship without any direction. Barring, Tunisia, results of Arab Spring alludes to the fact.

On the contrary U.S. and the West has supported secular leadership in many Muslim countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan etc.). The secular leadership in these Muslim countries suppress Islamic movements in their countries. Political Islam is considered by many Muslims as expression of their aspirations, but secular leaders oppressive policies against them foment extremism in general population. Islamist parties with reformist agendas are targeted by dictators. The suspension or weakening of Islamist reformist parties lead to parallel shift to violence as a reactionary outcome.⁹⁹ In Egypt, Muslim Brothers in the 1970s saw al-Takfir wal-Hijra (Excommunication and Exodus) parting ways after successive Egyptian governments rejected reformist agenda and becoming a radical extremist group. Similarly, Ayman al-Zawahri and Sheikh Omar Abdel Rehman were outcast members of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.¹⁰⁰ The bilateral cooperation in security with non-democratic authoritarian regimes to eradicate terrorist threat reinforces adverse attitude towards the regimes and U.S. alike.¹⁰¹ This becomes a rallying point by Islamists to broaden the cleavage between the moderate voices and extremism within Muslim countries. Authoritarian institutions in these regimes do not allow pluralistic Islamist reformed political parties and treat them as a threat to own rule. The political repression turns into violent response by the Islamists or the ruptured splinters of these parties' due to the authoritarian institutions of the regimes.

At the time of Iraqi invasion in 2003, U.S., besides other objectives like removal of Saddam Hussein, trumpeted the promotion of democracy in Middle East. May it be Hamas victory in January 2006 in Palestinian Parliamentary elections or Muslim Brotherhood victory in Egyptian elections after fall of Hosni Mubarak, U.S. and Western governments response in terms of supporting or accepting the democratic results was

⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ Abdesalam M. Maghraoui, American Foreign Policy and Islamic Renewal, United States Institute of Peace, Special Report 164, July 2006.

appalling. Western support and patience for democratic transitions have been short sighted and short lived. Early successes by Islamists in elections resulted in back paddling by the west.

Western efforts to impose democracy in some countries in Middle East did not match with the words and belief of democratic ideals. The message to general masses in these Muslim countries is clear that it is not the democracy but interest driven policies of the west which are supreme. U.S. support for democracy in the Middle East is a sham. Its continuous support for Saudi Arabia and the rest of Gulf Monarchies is a case in point. Similarly, military dictatorships across Muslim world is a constant reminder of U.S. double standards of diplomacy and foreign policy goals. Successive dictatorships in Egypt since Gamal Abdul Nasir till Hosni Mubarak and eventually Sissi is example of lack of democratic dispensation to general population. Syria, Jordan, Iran (Shah of Iran) and Iraq (Saddam Hossain during Iran-Iraq war) are all examples of Western policy dual standards. During Arab spring Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak were supported till last possible moment against the pro-democracy protestors in these countries.

U.S. counter-terrorism policy is constrained by geopolitical imperatives of alliances with countries who are strong U.S. allies but are also involved in the conflicts which affect Muslim world. U.S. cannot solve every political, social, economic problem of Islamic world, but it can influence its resolution. But it is the failure to address root causes of conflicts which have religious as well as pan-Islamic undertones. Arab-Israel, Palestine-Israel and Kashmir problem are the conflicts which have motivated people to free them from subjugation from other states. Failure to solve these issues have incentivized Islamists to pursue non-peaceful means for rightful purpose. The right of self-determination to exercise the will of the people as enshrined in UN charter and UN resolutions concerning these conflicts must be pursued. These conflicts have demonstrated their enduring legitimacy in Islamic world, which have for long created grievances of injustice. U.S. must show its resolve to solve these issues using its strategic clout. Conflicts like these continue to generate anti-Western sentiments.

The end of Islamist terrorism may not end immediately with West stopping to intervene in Muslim countries affairs. The militarized western foreign policy will not stop

the persistence of Islamist terrorism. Nor will it decline immediately with democratic dispensation. These inconsistent policies which are interest driven for short term gains as opposed to long term policies based on long term goals with mutual respect for each other's interests will bridge the yawning gap of perceptions and realities. This negative image of Western policies in Islamic world have contributed to the negative perception and grievance in the eyes of Islamic world which has fueled violent and extremist actions on the part of Muslims and persistence of Islamist terrorism.

III. RESILIENCE OF RADICAL ISLAMIST IDEOLOGY AND ITS APPEAL IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

In this chapter, I analyze the extent to which the appeal of the radical Islamist ideology can explain the resiliency of this movement in the Islamic World. Radical Islamist ideology has persisted despite all the efforts and resources dedicated over many decades to defeat it. The often-misunderstood relationship between political violence in Islamic societies and Islam as a religion will be explained and a general overview of Islamism, and its multiple manifestations will be provided.¹⁰² Certain scholars, academics, and importantly radical extremist organizations justify violence with reference to Islamic texts, symbols, and narratives. I will assess the actual arguments of violent Jihadists and how they have sought to anchor them in Islamic sources and traditions. This chapter explains the major contextual misinterpretations of Islam and the causal relationship established by extremists with regards to jihad, takfir, and martyrdom. The presumption being that the greater the success in framing extremist violence as religiously sanctioned, the greater the appeal of violence as an alternative to non-violent methods becomes for these violent groups. The Salafi-Jihadi creed has resultantly found legitimacy in some sections of Muslim societies, and extremist organizations have used this ideology to justify their actions. The validity of this argument will be tested with historical evidence.

A. ISLAMIST THOUGHT

Peace is highly regarded in Islam, and one of the central aspirations of Islamic society.¹⁰³ Muslim extremists like all other religions of the world, often justify non-peaceful means to achieve their ends. Of course, Islam is not unique in that regard as other religions (Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists etc.) have manifested this same phenomenon. As Bernard Lewis comments, “the question is not what has Islam done to

¹⁰² The word Islam itself comes from “salama,” which means peace, purity, obedience and, submission by Seth Nii and Ibipo Johnston-Anumonwo, *Diversity, Multiculturalism, and Social Justice* (New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 2002), 388.

¹⁰³ Al-Quran, Chapter 8, Verse 61. “But if the enemy inclines towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah: for He is One that heareth and knoweth (all things).”

the Muslims? But what have the Muslims done to Islam?”¹⁰⁴ merits internal reflection for the Islamic societies that have endured waves of violence in recent decades. Mustafa Ceric, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia said, “as the violent small minority of any faith does not represent the peaceful great majority of that faith, therefore Islam is not to be labeled as a ‘terrorist religion.’”¹⁰⁵

The question under analysis is to what extent can the ideological appeal of violent Islamists explain their resilience? Islamist extremists’ interpretation of religion has found appeal in sections of societies, and have endured over the decades. The question cannot be answered decisively, but one strategy to provide insight about the role of ideology in enduring extremism is to develop understanding about how extremists view concepts of Jihad, Takfir, and Martyrdom. Extremists shield themselves behind Islam and declare their interpretation as true, and imposing singular version only. Out of context, literal and selective interpretations of the Quran and Hadith, are the basis of the ideological understanding of Islam promoted by extremists.¹⁰⁶ As Jason Burke mentioned, that it is the ‘conviction based on contextual selectivity of holy texts (Qur’an, Hadith and Sunnah), mythical historical examples, theories, legends, prejudice, circular arguments which are advertised by violent/extremist’s organizations and find credence in Muslim societies.¹⁰⁷

Any (mis)interpretation by individual, group or organization for lamenting violence is their own construct, and not sanctified by Islam.¹⁰⁸ The Jihadis find themselves constrained by two diametrically opposed requirements of securing strong footings in Islamic rulings as regards to justifiable violence and their legitimacy, and at the same time explicit references in Islamic text, which does not sanction violence. Prohibition of homicide has been clearly shunned in Islam. The clearly worded

¹⁰⁴ Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong?: The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2002), 156.

¹⁰⁵ Philip Seib, “The News Media and the ‘Clash of Civilizations,’” *Parameters*, vol. 34 (Winter 2004–05): 82.

¹⁰⁶ Abdurrahman Wahid, “Right Islam vs. Wrong Islam,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, vol. 3 (2006), 3.

¹⁰⁷ Burke, *The New Threat*, 35.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Qur’an, Chapter 5, Verse 32.

constraints on intentional suicide is not allowed in Islam.¹⁰⁹ Muslims are not allowed to take the lives of co-religionists.¹¹⁰ Similarly, Muslims cannot harm non-combatant or civilians willfully.¹¹¹ These constraints make it abundantly clear that Islam does not approve violence in any form and believes in the nobility of human life. Yet, Jihadis have circumvented these interpretations and equated violence with Jihad, suicide with martyrdom, declaring Muslims as infidels (kuffar), and made violence as justifiable course of action for their actions. It is these three-fundamental ideological aspects of Jihad, Martyrdom, and Takfir which violent jihadis promote and has found resilient acceptance in sections of Islamic societies.

B. ISLAMISM AND ITS IDEOLOGY

Islamism is characterized by a shared belief that translates philosophies of Islam as per the core textual references and authoritative explanations of renowned scholars.¹¹² It centers on political interpretations of Islam to promote Islamic activism through political means. Islamism is also split between modernists and radicals. Sayyid Qutb (radical) and al-Banna (modernist) interpret Islamism in different ways. Modernists believe in incorporating Western concept the state, as a multi-party and constitutional political entity.¹¹³ Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of Islamism rested on the strict rejection of Western political thought.¹¹⁴

Salafist ideology has also been subjected to interpretations by circumstances. The word salaf (emulation), is derived from the time of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) and his pious companions (al-salaf al-salih), usually defined as the first three generations of Muslims.¹¹⁵ Salafism emerged in late 19th century with Islamic scholars like Jamal al-

¹⁰⁹ Al-Qur'an, Chapter 4, Verse 29–30.

¹¹⁰ Al-Qur'an, Chapter 4, Verse 93.

¹¹¹ Al-Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 190.

¹¹² International Crisis Group, "Understanding Islamism," *Middle East Report* 37 (March 2, 2005):2.

¹¹³ Ahmad Moussalli, "Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism: Who is the Enemy?" A Conflict Forum Monograph (January 2009).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3.

Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh.¹¹⁶ They were referred to as Islamic modernists, who propagated reinterpretation of Islam basing on importance of reason in understanding the original intent of Islamic teachings. They rejected taqlid (blind imitation) and were proponents of ijihad (new interpretations).

Rashid Rida, however, differed from his mentor Abduh, since he was skeptical of Western influences. He believed embracing Western practices would undermine the religion from within.¹¹⁷ His disagreement was on method and not on the foundational pillar of tawhid. Salafism foundational pillar is strict adherence to tawhid.¹¹⁸ The concept of tawhid is in the uniqueness and oneness of God. God is the creator, supreme, who does not share any characteristics with those He has created and is the only one worthy of worship.¹¹⁹ Salafism believes that political, social, and religious fragmentations in Islam is a result of deviation from the Qur'an, and the teachings (Sunnah) of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) as narrated by his companions.¹²⁰

The contemporary Salafists inclination today is derived from Rashid Rida but respect for modern Salafist predecessors al-Afghani and Abduh is equally accepted because of their adherence to the core principles of Islam and purification of society.¹²¹ Contemporary Salafism as practiced by Qutb and others is subdivided into groups basing on the implementation of belief and jurisprudence to modern issues.¹²² In Salafists reckoning, the challenges warrant emphasis on importance of scholars in studying and interpreting Islam. Their belief rested on the assumption that without religious scholars the education will wither, and consequently, the mission of promoting tawhid will diminish.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 6

¹¹⁷ Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, 154–158.

¹¹⁸ Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of Salafi Movement,” 207.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 208.

¹²⁰ Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 6–8.

¹²¹ Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, 154–158.

¹²² Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of Salafi Movement,” 207–208.

The categorization of three subgroups have been made by Wiktorowicz in his “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement” basing on different contextual understanding. He suggests that contemporary Salafism is composed of three main categories of adherents: Purists (established and traditionalists), Politicos (rejectionists), and Jihadis (radicals).¹²³

C. PURISTS (ESTABLISHED AND TRADITIONALISTS)

Purists interpretation of Islam is strictly peaceful, who do not advocate violence under any circumstances and pretext. Purists consider themselves as the purest of all the Salafi contemporary factions. Their emphasis of purification, propagation, and education sees to expand and reinvigorate Islam through peaceful means.¹²⁴ Indulgence in politics for them is deviating from true cause and therefore, is a distraction. They believe that purification of Islam is only possible by strictly entrenching oneself to stay away from politics and violence. They believe that it is important to promote strong belief system which can combat Islam from corrupting practices, both internally and externally. Purists focus on doctrinal aspects of religion. In order to attain this goal, Purists follow three step sequential method of implementation, dawa (propagation), tazkiya (purification) and tarbiya (religious education or cultivation). This isolationist approach stems from the idea that Islam is a complete code of life, so all the knowledge and guidance stem from the religion. Any interaction with nonbelievers will corrupt the practices of religion.

Purists cite the example of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) when He started preaching Islam. The implementation of Islam must stem from Prophetic traditions. In Purists view, if Prophet can successfully preach Islam without resorting to politics or violence, why it is necessary to innovate a model which He successfully emulated.¹²⁵ Purists regard politics and violence as unnecessary innovation which can have corrupting influence on purity of Islam. Purists departure from other two factions of Salafism is based on intent of human desire and therefore resort to boycotting (hajr) of all forms of

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 208.

¹²⁵ Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of Salafi Movement,” 217.

publications from other two factions.¹²⁶ Purists do not doubt the intention of the other two factions, but reliance on methods (politics and violence) which were not used by Prophet are counterproductive. Purists like Syrian-Jordanian Muhammad Nasir al-Albani, and the incumbent Saudi Arabian religious establishment are prime examples of Purists who reject peaceful political role through political means.¹²⁷ Purists therefore are peaceful.

D. POLITICOS (REJECTIONISTS)

Second faction of Salafist, the Politicos (rejectionists), claim themselves to be well versed with modern percepts and reality. They share the same precepts of Western influences as corrupting Islamic purity, but differ on method of achieving it. They consider themselves better equipped to implement Salafi creed in modern context. Politicos think that corrupt leaders and Western influences have endangered the purity of religion. Political activism to them is not only necessary but morally obligatory. They believe that better understanding of international relations and current events can foster better religious leadership. They believed engaging in political discourse will act as a check on ruler's policies and will garner influence to protect religion from any un-Islamic policies to keep Salafist ideology to endure. In Saudi Arabia, after Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, invitation to U.S. coalition by the monarchy to be stationed, led to a clear split between two factions.¹²⁸ Fatwa by Purists was an expediency and against their philosophy. This was the alternative which Politicos were offering, that one cannot keep oneself aloof from international relation, current events (al-fiqh al-waqi), and politics. This debate and difference of opinion within Salafism was a transition from one generation to the other. The division between two factions was prompting Jihadis to introduce violence to attain their goals.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 220–221

¹²⁷ Ibid., 220.

¹²⁸ Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of Salafi Movement," 222–223.

Other than Saudi Arabia, Politicos inspired groups have grown significantly in Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait since 1980s. Arab Spring has leased new life to Politicos where their influence has increased in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria and Lebanon.

E. JIHADIS

The third faction of Salafi creed is Jihadi (radicals). Jihadis, like purists and politicos share the same fundamentals of Salafism i.e., the preserving the basic tenants of tawhid for purification of Islamic society by following tenants of Qur'an and Sunna. Jihadis differ on methodology from purists and politicos for achieving Salafism goals. They believe in resorting to violence and non-peaceful means instead of education and political activism in order to achieve the goals.¹²⁹ Jihadis consider current environment feasible to employ violence, because their interpretation signifies threat to Islam by Western powers. Although Jihadis resort to legitimacy of violence comes in line with Politicos disapproval of Saudi government decision to allow allied forces to station in Holy Land against Iraqi threat and against Purists fatwa in support of Saudi government. Pall Zoltran termed these Jihadis as 'violent offshoots of the politicos'.¹³⁰

Many Salafis support the overthrow of governments: jihadis through violence, and politicos through political engagement, which can include protests and revolution (as in the case of Egypt and Tunisia). Some Salafis also believe that other Muslims who do not subscribe to a particular set of beliefs may not be termed as takfir, which is an extremist interpretation and a cause of fitna (chaos, strife). Salafis support for ouster of Hosni Mubarak and Qaddafi, however, was for political reasons and not as a nod against apostates/takfir. This support was an expression against dictatorship and repression. Jihadists interpretation of these ousters was against apostates/takfirs. Jihadis organizations like al-Qaeda, Ansar al-Sunna (Iraq), and the al-Nusra Front (Syria) are expressions of same philosophy of overthrowing apostate/takfir regimes in Muslim countries.

¹²⁹ Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of Salafi Movement," 225.

¹³⁰ Pall Zoltran, *Lebanese Salafis between the Gulf and Europe: Development, Fractionalization and Transnational Networks of Salafism in Lebanon*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013, 24

Most contemporary Salafists strongly despise violence and reject the violent methods of the Jihadis. Salafis and the vast majority of Muslims do not approve of Jihadis interpretation of Salafists.¹³¹ They consider these Jihadis as overtly political and unschooled.¹³² “Jihad, in the eyes of most Salafis, is appropriate only under rare circumstances and should not involve taking innocent blood.”¹³³ A detailed analysis of the Salafists reveal that peaceful inclinations are the founding pillars of Salafists. Contemporary Salafists look towards West with misgivings, but only a small component of Salafists, the Jihadis perspective is non-peaceful. Oversimplification of these differences and labelling all Salafis as exponents of violence is counterproductive.

F. ORIGINS OF EXTREMIST THOUGHT

Syed Qutb, an Egyptian scholar is regarded as the architect of contemporary global Jihad. Qutb’s writings and ideas may be interpreted in contextual settings by different people. But it was Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian born who theorized the concept of Jihad, as we see it today.¹³⁴ An Al-Azhar university graduate, turned the Afghan Jihad into a global platform for Muslims to fight for a common goal transcending national boundaries through his seminal work. His ideas were explicit about Jihad, without leaving any room for interpretation.

The mushrooming of Mujahedeen in Afghanistan during the 1980s gave impetus to Azzam’s theory. He wrote two treatises, “The Defense of Muslim Territories” and “Join the Caravan” in the mid 1980s to instigate Muslims around the world and help through financial and humanitarian aid.¹³⁵ He advocated that it is individual obligation

¹³¹ Byman, *The Five Front War: The Better Way to Fight Global Jihad*, 40.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, eds., *Al-Qaeda in its Own Words* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2009), 101.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 97.

(farz ayn) that every Muslim must commit to.¹³⁶ He declared that the Afghan Jihad was a defensive jihad to expel non-believers from Muslim territory. Azzam quoted Quranic verses that linked action/or inaction to consequences in the life hereafter. He combined day to day religious obligations with concept of Jihad to instill validity to his theory.

Azzam also emphasized the concept of martyrdom and its rewards by God. He established symbiotic relationship between martyrdom and bravery, a concept which is very appealing to young, politicized Muslims, especially those living in the midst of conflict. He very succinctly advocated the idea of Jihad with common Muslims beliefs which was easy to understand, and difficult to deny for younger generation. The present environment made the jobs of Jihadis much easier than earlier times. This theory had a significant impact on Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahri. It was the groundwork laid by Azzam, which became the foundation for Osama bin Laden's transformation of the concept of Jihad into a global, anti-Western ideology.

G. JIHAD IN ISLAMIST DISCOURSE

The concept of Jihad in Islam has often misconstrued as terrorism especially since 9/11. Quranic misperceptions result when verses are taken out of context and applied to suit one's point of view. Not understanding the "Asbab-ul-Nazool," or the reasons behind Quranic revelation, for a specific verse and its application to a specific situation, has resulted in a more politicized reading of the Quran. Certain extremist groups and organizations twist and distort verses about "Jihad" in order to pursue their agenda.

George Bernard Shaw said that knowledge of words is the gateway to scholarship. The word Jihad is derived from Juhd, "to struggle" or "to strive."¹³⁷ Jihad is interpreted

¹³⁶ Islamic Law (Sharia) has made another distinction between "Farz-e-Kifayah" (non-obligatory duty), and "Farz-e-Ayn" (an obligatory duty). Qital (war), is termed as "Farz-e- Kifayah." Qital becomes "Farz-e-Ayn" only when an Islamic government or state declares war and encourage people to participate in it. Normal circumstances do not merit Qital, becoming a compulsory duty (Farz-e-Ayn). This distinction is about an obligation of society/government and an individual. So, kifayah, would mean that as long as the government or larger Muslim society has the capacity to wage jihad when necessary, then obligation is met, and there is no sin for the community. "Ayn" would mean that every individual is obligated to perform jihad, regardless of what the larger government/ society is doing, and if they do not perform jihad than they are committing a sin.

¹³⁷ Yoginder Sikand, "The Concept of Jihad in Islam," Indian Muslims (October 9, 2008), <http://indianmuslims.in/the-concept-of-jihad-in-islam/>.

as utmost striving to achieve goodness and avoid evil. Zamir Akhtar Khan explains that certain Muslim scholars have incorrectly equated Jihad with Qital (war).¹³⁸ In Qur'an Jihad and Qital are frequently treated as two separate self-determining terms. These two terms are not synonymous to each other. The conflation of these terms by extremists has led to confusion in Islamic societies.¹³⁹ This confusion has proliferated the concept of Jihad as meaning Qital, radical ideologues as well as non-Muslims afforded this opportunity to equate Jihad with violence only.

The term Jihad is misapprehended having many definitions. Regrettably, Jihad in Encyclopedia Britannica is defined negatively, "Jihad as a 'struggle' or 'battle,' a religious obligation enacted on Muslims to spread religion by conducting war."¹⁴⁰ Jihad, as a word, is translated as 'Holy War'. The Arabic corresponding word for 'Holy War' is 'Harb-ul-Muqadasah'.¹⁴¹ Qur'an does not use the term 'Holy War' in its verses. Islam does not ordain Muslims to fight against non-Muslims merely on their being from different religion. The concept of jihad has been misinterpreted and misused throughout Islamic history. Jihadis have also subscribed to this definition of Jihad as explained earlier.

Jihadists believe that Jihad (Qital) is the form of propagation of Islam (da'wa) under the present circumstances. Jihadis interpret their resort to violence as Qital, which is misinterpretation of the term as already explained earlier. Hegghammer says that, Jihadis are the least understood and ill-defined.¹⁴² All Muslims do believe in Jihad as intrinsic to Islam. The distinction between Jihadis, and rest of Muslims lies in the ideological support professed by Jihadis for revolutionary Jihad (including global Jihad).

¹³⁸ Zamir Akhtar Khan, "Concept of Jihad in Islam," *The Dialogue*, Vol. III, Number 2, 2008, 168–190.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v., "Islam," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/303857/jihad> ¹⁴¹

Michael G. Knapp, "The Concept and Practice of Jihad in Islam," *Parameters* (Spring 2003): 82–94.

¹⁴² Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism," in Meijer (ed), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religions Movement* (London: Hurst, 2009), 257

They believe that current context justifies violence.¹⁴³ It is these interpretations which have mushroomed over a period of time and has been molded by different Jihadis to mutilate and bend different concepts to suit their politico-religious agenda.

The emergence of Jihadis in the wake of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, where global Jihad was called for against the atheist/non-believer occupying force. This was political manifestation of achieving goals on the battlefield. Jihadis wanted to change the reality by force of circumstances. Later, Osama bin Laden (a Saudi), Ayman Al-Zawahri, and Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi were the product of these events and professed their own interpretation to these events. The subjective interpretations of Jihad provided a foundation for extremist strands in Islamic history to cherry picking of arguments to justify warfare and violence under the rubric of Islam against fellow Muslims as well as non-Muslims. Interpretations are affected by circumstances, Jihad in its spiritual, defensive, and in offensive manifestation is also the product of the same. The noble concept of Jihad has also been made to serve the interests of extremist ideologies.

H. TAKFIR IN JIHADIST DISCOURSE

The concept of Takfir, as interpreted by Jihadis has resulted in violence on sectarian lines and has justified killing co-religionists on this ideological leaning. Takfir is declaring Muslims to be infidels.¹⁴⁴ Distinction is made on the basis of degree of piety on genuine and nominal Muslims.¹⁴⁵ This distinction creates legitimacy for extremists to kill Muslims, whereas, on the contrary this looks killing of fellow Muslims to all others. Mohammad M. Hafez explains extremists' categorization of takfir as tyrants, apostates, heretics/polytheists, and true believers.¹⁴⁶

Extremists definitions of Takfir, allow for rulers who do not impose Islamic law in their states to unilaterally excommunicated from the Islamic fold. Extremists similarly see all individuals who do not practice Islam along the lines set by extremists, or who are

¹⁴³ Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of Salafi Movement," 208.

¹⁴⁴ Mohammad M. Hafez, *Fault Lines in Global Jihad: Organizational, Strategic, and Ideological Fissures* (Routledge: New York, 2011), 27.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

seen to be accomplices of unjust rulers, as non-believers. Minority religions, such as Baha'is, Ahmadis, and even Sufis and Shites, can be deemed heretics for not abiding by the extremist's definition of tawhid (monotheism). Apostates are those individuals who does not show allegiance to fellow Muslims and are accomplice to tyrants and non-believers. True believers as per extremists are those who believe in Islamists ideology and are not associated with any of the above-mentioned categories of takfir.¹⁴⁷ Extremists take Quranic verse (5:44) to substantiate their point of view on dealing with tyrants.¹⁴⁸ They group them outside the pale of Islamic belief and therefore, slaying them does not violate Islamic teachings from their perspective.

Extremists definition of apostates and heretics allow them to be killed. They rest their rationale for declaring apostates and justifiable violence is from Quranic verse (5:51).¹⁴⁹ Status of non-believers and all those who associate themselves in helping them becomes the basis of their interpretation. The extremists, however, differ on the process of labelling apostates and heretics. Collective and individual takfir is debated by extremists in different modes of its application. Abu Basir al-Tartusi and Sayyid Imam have explained very elaborate process of collective and individual takfir of declaring apostates.¹⁵⁰ They do subscribe to the definition of apostates but has made extensive procedural requirements before declaring anybody as apostates. The outwardly appearance of individuals do not make them a candidate of individual takfir before a reasonable process of judgement. Sayyid Imam also makes a distinction between actions and intentions before declaring anybody apostates.¹⁵¹

Violent Jihadis like Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Abu Yahya al-Libi, and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi have taken the concept of takfir to extreme levels basing on these textual proofs.¹⁵² Non-believers, their helpers, rulers or common person in some capacity makes

¹⁴⁷ Hafez, *Fault Lines in Global Jihad*, 27.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Mohammad M. Hafez, "The Alchemy of Martyrdom: Jihadi Salafism and Debates over Suicide Bombings in the Muslim World," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 38 (2010), 367.

¹⁵⁰ Hafez, *Fault Lines in Global Jihad*, 28–29

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 29.

¹⁵² Ibid., 32–33.

them takfirs, and therefore, a legitimate target of violence in the eyes of these violent Jihadis. The broad definition of takfir as understood by them, has virtually put everyone in the category of takfir and legitimizing the violence. Supposed apostates, like rulers, their policies, and individuals who support them becomes an automatic takfirs and liable to be killed by these extremists. Saudi Arab policy in Gulf War was interpreted by Jihadis and Osama bin Laden as an extension of the same perspective. Jihadis believe that regimes which serve Western interests having secular tendencies may be termed as apostates, and declared takfirs and, therefore can be legitimately removed.¹⁵³

I. MARTYRDOM IN EXTREMIST DISCOURSE

The concept of Martyrdom is another important aspect which extremists have reframed basing on the intentionality clause and termed as sacrifice rather than suicide. Extremists assumption is based on the attacker's motives of sacrificing himself in order to kill enemies of Islam, and therefore, sacrifice becomes sacred. Equating sacrifice with martyrdom, avoids the curse of suicide in Islam as per extremist's ideology. In this way extremist's actions appear legitimate and laid on solid foundation of Islamic tradition. The suicide bombings in many Muslim countries like Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan and other Muslim countries are being carried out in the midst of same martyrdom and not suicide.¹⁵⁴ These suicide attacks are carried in a way that collateral damage is not avoided, but extremist have textual references in which these actions are legitimized.

Suicide terrorism is a result of individual killing himself. Many prominent Salafi scholars like Sheikh Nasir Albani, Abdul Aziz bin Baz and Abd al-Aziz al-Shayak have explained that suicide is not permitted in Islam on any pretext.¹⁵⁵ Extremists however interpret categorizing Martyrdom in differently in Quranic verses 2:207, 3:169, 4:69, 4:74, 4:95-96 and 9:20-22.¹⁵⁶ The importance of sacrificing for a greater cause and in the process losing life is sanctioned in Islam and declared Martyr. But Islam does not

¹⁵³ Blanchard, *The Islamic Traditions of Wahhabism and Salafiyya*, 228

¹⁵⁴ Hafez, "The Alchemy of Martyrdom," 365.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 371.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

sanctify suicide on any pretext. Extremists innovated the concept of human intention, thereby associating suicide with sacrifice, which consequently is termed as Martyrdom.

Human intention innovation by extremists created cleavage between suicide and martyrdom. Action for self-escapism by weak willed individual was termed as suicide and therefore haram. Martyr sacrifice is noble because it for a greater good and not for personal reason. Abu Qatada explained through Prophetic traditions the intentionality of killing oneself and killing himself in the fulfilment of God's command.¹⁵⁷ He extended this notion of martyrdom to greater interest of Muslims as it is meant to benefit Islam and not to oneself. This distinction of intention clearly gave extremists a Prophetic tradition of martyrdom as opposed to suicide.

Extremists have used a combination of constructivist and interpretive methodology to legitimize their actions in Islamic traditions and text.¹⁵⁸ This adaptable tactic of tilting between two sides have given them currency to sell it to Muslim youth. The context, conditionality, theories of jurisprudence, and imaginative logics are ignored by extremists to serve their ideology.¹⁵⁹

Jihadis continuous growth and increasing influence in Islamic societies cannot be negated. These diversified interpretations within Salafi creed lead to confusion amongst Muslim youth and create space for Islamists terrorists to mold them as per their own misguided and disenfranchised motivations. Terrorist organizations are astute ideological actors who know how to appeal to their societies. They have developed coherent ideology to sell their interpretation of religion to garner support and cultivate younger Muslim generations to their folds. The violent nature of Salafis-Jihadis work on a broad canvas of themes which have a broader appeal to young Muslims. Transcontinental Jihad, misgivings against West, rebel against domestic regimes, Muslim unity, importance of military action and concept of martyrdom is played by terrorist's groups to attract the energies of Muslim societies.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 372.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 377.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 378.

In my view, whether jihadists genuinely believe in their interpretations of divine imperatives for violence or are simply manipulating religious feelings to advance a particular political agenda cannot be known for certain. Both are possible and they are not mutually exclusive. What is certain, however, is that part of the endurance of violent jihadism is their ability to frame violence as religiously sanctioned. They have managed to portray themselves as religious authorities that can interpret divine will, apply it in practice, and be closer to God (Allah) for it. They have also managed to inspire youth from around the world to sacrifice themselves with the belief that they will be rewarded in this world and the life hereafter. The ideology, however, resonates because of the other two factors discussed in previous chapters: the missteps by United States and other powers, and the structural conditions within Islamic world that lead to anger and outrage that creates fertile grounds of opportunities for extremists that they would not otherwise have.

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IV. GOVERNANCE DEFICIENCIES IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

The set of governance deficiencies in the Muslim World which keep reproducing violent/militant tendencies are diversified and complex. Many factors can be attributed to this problem like poor governance, authoritarian political institutions, socio-economic problems, and institutional variables which create enabling environment for sections of Islamic societies to indulge in violent behavior. Authoritarian and secular rule suppresses the plurality in society, and leads to Islamists gaining currency. Lack or absence of contract between the state and the society leads to diminishing legitimacy of the state. The resultant injustice because of poor governance results in inequality and is one of the root causes of Islamist terrorism. This chapter tests the validity of these root causes and establishes a causal relationship between the recurrence of militant tendencies and governance deficiencies in the Islamic world.

Academics have offered a diversified menu of causes, factors, and possible drivers of Islamist terrorism ranging from political repression, identity crisis, feelings of humiliation, poverty, corruption, nepotism, cronyism, marginalization, illiteracy and unemployment.¹⁶⁰ All of those factors and many more are important, but one size fits all solution cannot be found. The role of leadership and type of governance are two fundamentally important factors. Regimes are not only types of government but they also reflect ruling the leader's ideology of running the state.¹⁶¹ The Islamic world today, with few exceptions, is a mix of different types of regimes from non-democratic authoritarian regimes to nominal democracies. The regimes are non-democratic, authoritarian, and military-centric, therefore, gains more importance in terms of their rule. The regimes are uniquely important because the ruler and its cronies are not accountable to the public. A democratic state theoretically, at least isn't a regime as such, but rather a representative governmental system with some sort of checks and balances on a leader's rule. The political connection between the role of the state, the economy, and society is intertwined

¹⁶⁰ Lia, "Jihadism in the Arab World after 2011."

¹⁶¹ Melani Cammett, Ishac Diwan, Alan Richards, John Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press: 2015), 73.

in any country, in Islamic world this relationship is more pronounced because of regime and weak democracies factor.¹⁶²

A. POOR GOVERNANCE

Poor economic prospects combined with repressive policies breeds discontentment and appeal of Islamist ideology gains credence. The population in Middle East and North Africa has increased four times since 1950, whereas the employment growth has failed to keep pace with the growing population. Seven largest nations in MENA has seen unemployment growth from 12.7 % to 15%.¹⁶³ This ratio leads to discontentment from secular political system and creates path towards Islamism. Failure of these governments to reform paves way for Islamist movements who gives solution of returning to Golden Islamic Era, a viable option.

Governance refers to many factors like political, social, economic, and institutional factors which determine the performance of a country on variety of factors.¹⁶⁴ World Bank Governance Indicators data set put voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, the rule of law, and perception of corruption as measuring tool for any country's performance.¹⁶⁵ Islamic countries seem to lag behind on all of these factors. Corruption is one important factor of governance. Transparency International ranks 176 countries on corruption index. Islamic countries like Syria, Yemen, Libya, Iraq, Lebanon, Iran, Egypt, Morocco, Turkey and Kuwait rank between 79 and 173. Although it is a small and simplistic sampling of the data and a singular factor, but reflects poor governance issues in Muslim world.

Poverty and unemployment breeds desperateness and hopelessness. Terrorist organizations plunge on these factors of breeding violence and use individuals for recruitment of terrorism. Poor economic conditions generate limited employment opportunities, and the demographic and population bulge in Islamic world has further

¹⁶² Ibid., 11.

¹⁶³ Edward Gardner, "Creating Employment in the Middle East and North Africa." International Monetary Fund, 2003, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/med/2003/eng/gardner/index.htm>.

¹⁶⁴ Cammett, Diwan, Richards, and Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, 77.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

exacerbated the problem for governments. Higher unemployment leads to destabilization problems and it encourages social tensions. Terrorism becomes a job seeking opportunity. The gap between hope and actual economic outcomes have been far from satisfactory.

Poverty and terrorism are interdependent factors. Poverty coupled with unemployment constrain people to unwillingly target innocent population. The terrorist organizations use these individuals to their cause. They offer them money and incentivize recruitment to their cause. They provide social security in terms of schools, health which the local governments fail to provide because of poor governance. They provide hope, short term benefits and easy solutions to immediate daily life problems. These unemployed poverty-stricken individuals join terrorist organizations not because of ideological or religious reasons, but because of poor economic status and responsibility to feed family. They become a tool in the hands of genuine terrorist organizations fulfills their commands because of personnel reasons.

Economic growth tends to generate wealth, prosperity, and employment opportunities. It brings positive changes in society and reduces chances for terrorists to focus on this aspect.¹⁶⁶ But poor governance institutions turn economic growth into unequal distribution of wealth. This inequality spurs political and social upheaval because of the changes the society experience. This leads to frustration and give terrorist organizations an opportunity to direct these individuals in the society to their direction and offer them alternative solutions.

Lack and level of education is also an important factor which offers opportunities to terrorist groups to focus their energy on this cadre of Islamic societies. Lack of education makes them easy prey of terrorist's propaganda and are vulnerable to terrorist groups brainwash. Education brings political maturity in society, but level of education exposes them to terrorist's groups manipulation. Educated and politically mature individuals become an instrument of discontent and are attractive customers, who rank better than uneducated individuals for terrorists. Educated and unemployed individuals

¹⁶⁶ Stephan Brooks, *Producing Security: Multi-National Corporations, Globalization, and the Changing Calculus of Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 265.

have the time, and equipped with skills. They are open to new ideas and adaptive to any environment. They become the core of terrorist's organizations, because they are educated and politically mature. They are skilled force of terrorist groups and therefore, force multipliers.

Economic grievances, unemployment, and lack of education alone do not make everyone a potential terrorist. Economic profile of Islamic countries suggest that a much greater number of people should join terrorists ranks, but only a very small proportion join them. The injustice in society in terms of unequal opportunities exacerbate personal irritations and frustrations. The relative deprivation, marginalization, discrimination based on sectarian lines makes them frustrated, and grievances simmer below the surface. It is these conditions which makes them desperate, angry, and a potential candidate for terrorist's recruitment. Feelings of injustice combined with socio economic factors force them to look for false promises given by terrorists.

B. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

Socio-economic factor is one of most important factor of discontentment in society. Society is a combination of individuals, and individual behaviors when combined together make societal cultures. Every individual is a product of society and is infected by all the contaminations of society. Muslim world at the moment is facing one of the most turbulent times in its history.

In Islamic world two distinct categories can be made in terms of the social contract given by the state to society. GCC countries as one category and the rest of Islamic world in another category. Although, GCC countries are monarchies with non-plural democratic credentials but the socio-economic indicators are better than the rest of Islamic countries. GCC countries, who all are monarchical corporations in their own right, the wave of extremism, terrorism being by product is relatively less than other Islamic countries. All the attributes of collective and individual liberties seem to be absent. Still, the societal behavior in these Gulf monarchies is distinctly different from the rest of the Islamic countries. The socio-economic indicators and more distinctly economic indicators are a lot better than the other group. Individual liberties seem to be curbed if not

discouraged entirely, but the social contract in terms of basic human needs, and welfare measures in terms of education, health, transportation, and many other aspects is either subsidized or provided as part of social contract.

The GCC monarchies are social welfare states, in which the state has taken the responsibility for well-being of the society but this aspect is traded with civil liberties including their right to self-govern. This is one of the most important aspects of social contract. The society will have no say in the government and state affairs. As part and parcel of this package the society has to show allegiance to the state and its monarchical leaders.

Every society is driven by its own social, cultural, and religious norms. One set of value system may not necessarily be the recipe for other. Every society has different norms and priorities defined by its own norms. This model by GCC states has seemed to work out for the social welfare monarchical states. This model suggests if states can manage to give a respectable lifestyle to their populations, states can be stabilized. This model may not be able to work out in different cultural settings having different social, cultural and religious value system. The definition of civil liberties may not be very important for them as long as social contract with the state seems to fulfil the requirement.

The non-GCC Islamic states seem to be in all kinds of disarray. The confusion, mayhem, and extremism emanating from this group of countries has not only engulfed these countries but has spilled over to neighboring states as well as the entire region. The Arab spring, which seemed to have ushered an era of change and ensuing democracy to bring positive results have threatened the very existence of these states. The utter destruction in these states seems to be a result of decades of mismanagement of the governance. These states are different in their religio-ethnic identities.

These states also have different modes of governments. Jordan has monarchy. Syria has dictatorship. Egypt has military dictatorship. Lebanon has democracy. Similarly, all others states have multi-faceted complex issues. This by itself is a marriage of convenience for so many states and their individual state identities. A common thread

running between all these non GCC Islamic countries have been poor governance and absence of social contract between the state and the society.

The socio-economic conditions of these states have been much below the standards of GCC countries. But the utter disregard for socio economic conditions of these states have been endured for many decades. The lack or absence of education, rule of law, civil liberties and many other aspects of societies have been neglected. The social liberties in some of these countries have been better than the rest but the economic conditions of these states were not good. This aspect led to disturbances in respective societies. The unequal distribution of wealth and resources has led to extremism in these societies. The same very similarities of culture, norms, and religion have not been able to stop the spread of extremism.

This brings us on the cross roads of the basic question of importance of socio economic conditions of any country. Countries or states having better socio-economic indicators have better chances to remain stable and away from extremism than those whose socio-economic condition is not managed well by their rulers.

C. SUPPRESSION OF ISLAMISTS

Counter terrorism measures, including military options can temporarily deter violence by terrorists, but till the time conditions that drive Islamic youth to violence persist, the recurrence of the phenomenon cannot be avoided. The correlation between political and economic interdependence is complicated.¹⁶⁷ But the process is controlled or conversely initiated by political process which brings economic prosperity. Similarly, political process in terms of state building and institutional framework is directed and controlled by the type of government. This results in stalled progress of democratic process of authoritarian rule.

If history is any guide to us, the mode of governance in Muslim countries have always been a mix of authoritarian, dictatorial, and monarchical rule. They all are inherently autocratic, and therefore individual or family corporations. Democracy is

¹⁶⁷ Jennifer Bremer and John D. Kasarda, "The Origins of Terror: Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy," *The Milken Institute Review* (Fourth Quarter, 2002): 34–48.

associated with the rule of law, individual liberty, and voice to call for collective and individual rights. If these attributes are taken as a minimum base line to define and characterize democracy than Islamic countries are fragrantly at the bottom of the table.

Democracy is not only anonymous to most of Islamic countries but has never been the mode of governance. The non-democratic regimes in Islamic world do not allow pluralistic society and democratic dispensation. People are not allowed to vent out grievances against regime, and the state apparatus, which turns directs them to violence. Islamists, therefore, come out as an alternative to authoritarian and secular rule. The poor governance by state apparatus makes Islamists as an attractive alternative to populace. As a reaction by secular regimes, the oppression against them vindicates Islamists point of view of state repression against a popular voice which promises political and economic development. State repression leads to violent reflective response out of the panic of losing what has been gained. The political activism of Islamists is based on bad governance because of absence of political reforms, and economic performance by the regimes.

State building involves creating capacity in government to build institutions like judiciary, police, health, education, tax collection mechanisms and states capability to ensure accomplishment of these functions. Establishment of legitimate institutions give confidence to dissenting elements to redress their grievances against government.

It is these structural deficiencies within Islamic World which terrorists exploit to their advantage in addition to the foreign policy objectives of U.S. and Western world, and ideological factors as discussed in second and third chapter of the thesis.

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V. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

A. SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

The thesis analyzed the root causes of the persistence of Islamist terrorism from 1979 through the present. The choosing of a particular timeframe as a reference point does indicate the political and religious dimensions of the thesis topic. The research topic is sensitive because of religious and political undertones, and any arbitrary assumptions could lead to the over-simplification of a complex problem. Terrorism in general, and violence in the name of religion has serious repercussions for world peace in general and in the Islamic world in particular. The root causes for persistence of Islamist terrorism could be many, but an attempt has been made to analyze the different aspects of these root causes.

This thesis has examined the Western-led policies in the Islamic world, which have been overtly militarized and have contributed to the structural deficiencies in Islamic world by providing support to non-democratic and authoritarian regimes for strategic and short term foreign policy goals. It has also analyzed radical Islamist ideology and its appeal in Muslim societies. Finally, it explored how the poor governance of authoritarian and non-democratic regimes have created social grievances in the Islamic world, which in turn have helped fuel extremism and terrorism. These factors provide an insight into the religious and political aspects behind the persistence of Islamist terrorism. Furthermore, the show that both political and religious factors have contributed to the problem of Islamist terrorism, and that focusing on religious ideology alone cannot explain the persistence of terrorism over time.

This chapter will give its findings basing on the hypothesis given in Chapter I, and then give its recommendations and way forward to solve the problem.

B. HYPOTHESIS EVALUATION

- (1) H I: Militarized policies of Western states against Islamic world in fighting Terrorism**

The first hypothesis made an endeavor to look into strategic factors of persistence of Islamist terrorism. The geopolitical and geostrategic policy objectives of U.S. and West led to perception of grievances by Islamic world. The data compiled and the research established a causal relationship between the foreign policy objectives and providing justification of violence to radical Islamists. These policies contributed to grievances and created a perception, which provided justification to terrorists for their actions. No matter how justifiable the U.S. and West led militarized policies from their perspective, it is very difficult to justify to Islamic world about the legitimacy of these policies.

These findings and competing accounts of these policies demonstrates that the assertion made in this hypothesis is true. It is the foreign policy objectives of U.S. and the West which have contributed to the persistence of Islamist terrorism and provided sufficient cause to terrorists despite fighting it for four decades.

(2) H II: Radical Islamist ideology and its appeal in Muslim societies

The second hypothesis attempted to look at the particular ideology used by Islamists to justify violence in the name of Islam. The Salafi creed in particular has found appeal in some sections of Islamic societies. Salafi Jihadis have interpreted the justification of violence in the name of jihad, takfir and martyrdom. Salafi jihadis interpretation of these three aspects have found legitimacy in the youth in Islamic world. They have bent the Quranic and textual proofs to their interpretation and has justified their actions. Their success lies in justification of violence in the name of Islam. This interpretative and constructionist narratives have been able to persist and provided fuel to radicals to sanction violence. These diversified interpretations create vacuum for the terrorists to fill the void and advance their legitimacy of actions in the name of Islam.

The diversified opinions and interpretations of Salafi creed ideology has provided sufficient cause to the enduring persistence of Islamist terrorism and proved the assumption as true in this hypothesis. A certain creed of Salafi jihadis interpretation of religion especially jihad as war, takfir as apostates, and suicide as martyrdom has granted legitimacy to violence and persistence of Islamist terrorism.

(3) H III: Governance deficiencies in the Muslim World, such as socio-economic weakness and authoritarian political institutions, keep reproducing militant tendencies.

The third hypothesis tested the assertion that a set of structural deficiencies in governance and authoritarian political institutions, and consequent socio-economic impact on Muslim society do provide enabling environment to keep reproducing violent tendencies. The assertion in this hypothesis is proved right.

The support provided to secular regimes\governments contributed to exasperation of existing structural deficiencies which lead to poor governance credentials in terms of human rights, political dispensation, corruption, injustice and unequal socio-economic opportunities. The secular governments oppressive policies against their population lead to the emergence of Islamists. These enabling environment provide a fertile ground to some of the Islamists radicals to advance their narratives which resort to violence to achieve their goals.

C. WAY FORWARD

An oversimplified approach towards combating terrorism that does not address the root causes of Islamist terrorism is bound to fail. It is the justifications used by terrorist organizations, which are the root causes of terrorism. The misperceptions about culture and religion on both ends of spectrum between the West and Islamic world must be appropriately prevented.

The U.S. and the West must also stop demonizing Islamophobia. The scholars, leaders and media in the West unintentionally create a narrative of Islam as a source of problem. The targeting of Islam as a religion provide sufficient justifiable narrative to jihadis to frame their narratives. The words used against Islam followed by actions in terms of invasions, bombings, indiscriminate drone strikes provide sufficient reason to not only the radicals, but common Muslims to have feelings of hate, grievances and revenge. It is the same very narrative which is used by the extremists to justify their violence. The militarized foreign policies of U.S. and the West cannot be justified to Muslims as a logical course of actions available to Western countries. The soft power

image of foreign policy should be advanced to bridge the gap of perception and reality. The political, economic and diplomatic channels must be in the forefront of policy options. The invasions and bombings of Islamic countries cannot be viewed as misperception by Muslims as long as they continue to happen in reality. The words must be supported by actions to reduce the grievance between Islamic countries and the West. The Clash of Civilization narrative is fueled by these overtly militarized policies and is justified by extremists to be true. As is said that perceptions are stronger than reality, the Western policies are realities and not perceptions. The grievances in Islamic world are not borne out of misperceived grievances but based on reality. It is these realities on which extremists thrive their narrative and provide sufficient cause of legitimacy and justification for their actions.

The conflicts involving Islamic countries like the Arab-Israel conflict, Kashmir problem, Rohingya problem in Myanmar, and many other conflicts involving Muslims must be solved to reduce the grievances in Islamic world against the West. These conflicts also provide sufficient cause for defensive jihad against oppressive rule. The right of self-determination must be respected and resistance against oppression may not be confused and labelled as terrorism.

Governance and authoritarian rule in Islamic world, where terrorism has persisted, the collective injustice, grievances, corruption, non-pluralistic political practices have also been in vogue. Author fully asserts with the views of Albert Bandura, “When power holders willfully disregard legitimate grievances concerning maltreatment then terrorists can easily persuade themselves that their actions are motivated by self-protection or desperation.”¹⁶⁸

The support of oppressive regimes having poor governance profile may not be supported. The removal of these regimes is also not an option. The governments in Islamic world may be helped and if required, forced to dispense democratic rights of population. The oppressive regimes which block the process of economic and political liberalization process must be coerced to stop using those repressive policies. The

¹⁶⁸ Imran Khalid Shafi, “Improving Counterterrorism Efforts By Removing Misconceptions About Islam In The Western World” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010), 78.

economic aid must be utilized to initiate the process of institutional framework which should help in delivering governance to their respective population. On the contrary economic tools may be used as a coercive tool against these inefficient governments to deliver to their population.

Religious leader's role in resolving the conflicts within the Islamic world is fundamentally important. Muslim scholars, leaders, and society have to take a uniform, collaborative stand on non-permissibility of violence against other Muslims as well as against non-Muslims to spread word of Islam. Moderate voices within Islamic scholars have to take front seat, and give counter narrative to terrorists' propaganda. Islamic scholars with unanimity have to forge a simplified solution for the consumption of common Muslims. The radical interpretation of terrorists has to be confronted by giving same religious texts contextual background to common Muslims. All modern means of communication must be used to counter the radical narrative, which promotes violence in the name of religion. The better narratives coming from religious scholars may be the most important tool to counter the narrative of terrorist's interpretation of religion.

An attempt should be made to put forward the human dimension of terrorism. The casualties of terrorism must be projected with narratives that the victims of these incidents in the name of collateral damage are normal human beings. It must be projected that all those who bear loss because of these actions are left fatherless, motherless and orphanage. It is these aspects which will help widen the gulf between extremists and the vast majority moderates. The projection of these terrorists as mass murderers with no regard to human life and its associated aspects must be highlighted. The sufferings of the victims of terrorism can be used to delink the relationship between religion and terrorism.

The way forward as given in the preceding paragraphs may not be able to reduce the misperceptions between Islam and the West very quickly, but it will initiate the process of reconciliation between the two sides. The grievances in the Islamic world are a result of long term policy objectives combined with poor governance. It is political and social grievances, more so than religious ideology, which has made the extremist narrative attractive to some in the Islamic world. Extremist ideology has also fueled radicalism within Islamic world by providing alternatives interpretations of Islam that

compete with the uniform and unanimous teachings of scholars. The persistence of Islamist terrorism is the sum total of all these factors and no single factor can be labelled as the sole reason for this phenomenon.

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