Jihadist Organizations
History and Analysis

Mudassir Farooqi
Imperial College of Business Studies, Lahore, Pakistan
Sarwar Mehmood Azhar
Sukkur Institute of Business Administration, Sukkur, Pakistan
Rubeena Tashfeen*
University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

This article attempts to understand the global jihadist movement as a new form of organizational unit, seeking a better understanding and control of terrorism and jihad. It reviews the history of a number of jihadist groups, including the Taliban, Hezbollah, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and the Tehreek Taliban Pakistan. The authors tell how "Jihad" has taken on a second meaning that exalts violence, as distinguished from the original meaning that speaks of spiritual self-improvement.

Keywords: Jihadist organizations, terrorism, Taliban, Afghanistan, Hezbollah, Al-Queda, definitions of Jihad, Tehreek Taliban Pakistan, ISIS.

Since 9/11, Jihadist organizations have been at the centre of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). Unless there is understanding of the real dynamics of the jihadi among themselves and their environment, counterterror measures will fail. With this in mind, it helps to see jihadism as an emergent form of modern organization.

The Taliban is a religiously inspired movement which had its roots in the Cold War era and in armed struggle against the former USSR (Duffield, 2002). The Taliban insurgency was supported by the West and its allies as the Mujahedeen[1] movement. In 1996, it took control of Kabul (Rubin, 2007). After capturing Kabul, it announced establishment of a Muslim Caliphate, with the Taliban leader Mullah Omar as the first Caliph. This regime remained in the spotlight until in 2001 the US-led war on terror ended the caliphate (Friedman, 2006).

[1]Mujahedeen are to be distinguished from jihadi. The term jihadi is of recent coinage whereas Mujahid is not.

* Address for communication; rubeenatashfeen7@gmail.com

Afghanistan was historically a country plagued by war and drug lords, and so was fertile ground for a socio-political movement in the name of Islam (McCrisken, 2011). By gaining control of territory, they achieved not just religious, but also political, aspirations.

Another religiously inspired socio-political movement is Hezbollah, a radicalised entity formed as a result of Israel's occupation of Lebanese territory. It was established in 1982 by the Shia sect of Islam and was inspired by the religious understandings of Iran supreme leader Ayat Ullah Khomeini. Since 1982, it has been involved in violent activities against Israel, the USA and other Western allies of Israel, initially through street protests. Hezbollah subsequently adopted jihad against Israel and started its struggle to liberate Lebanon from foreign invaders (Houri et al., 2010). Hezbollah's inspiration is Islamic but the goal is also political, with the objective of regaining a territory and establishing an Islamic state like Iran (Norton, 2007).

Al-Qaeda, established in the 1980s, positioned itself as an Islamic ideological movement claiming liberation of the Muslim faith from the Western agenda. It declared armed struggle as the only means of Muslim liberation and salvation (Jackson, 2006; Pham, 2011). To gain support, they initially launched themselves as a voice against the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia, with the objective of ridding the sacred holy land of the presence of Infidels. They declared jihad as the first and foremost duty of every Muslim, who should seek a reversion to the political status of the lost Khilafat, with its stated objective of purity (Riedel, 2007). The leaders of Al-Qaeda claimed implementation of Shariat with the sword of violence. The Al-Qaeda implicit objectives reveal that the claiming of Khilafat involves the acquirement of territory and governance. Al-Qaeda's initial struggle and agenda was in opposition to the Saudi monarchy and its inclination toward the USA. But because of the political and governance structure of the Saudi government, it was not possible for Al-Qaeda to demonstrate through street level protests. This led them to armed struggle as a transnational form of protest (Turner, 2010).

Khilafat, Islamic Jihad and Politics: Historical Perspective

Hazleton (2010) argues that the events after the Prophet of Islam Mohammad are more political than religious. He believes the ideology set by Prophet Mohammad in the seventh century were misrepresented or misinterpreted, putting the Islamic principles of human dignity, equality above ethnicity and a culture of tolerance in a different context

than was envisaged by the Prophet. After the death of the Prophet, the Khilafat that was committed to implementing his message shifted its focus to politics and political supremacy, adopting an ideology of territorial and resource control. For more discussion on this topic, see *History of Arabs* by Hitti (2002) and *Short History of Islam* by Armstrong (2007).

The struggle for supremacy and a political divide among Muslims resulted in different interpretations of jihad. Jihad originated from the Arabic language and in a generic sense is defined as a particularly self-transcendental effort to fight against your own self (Grafton, 2011; Harb et al., 2013; Taymiyyah et al., 1999). While defending the Muslim identity by referring to the Koran (the Holy Book of Muslims), Yildiz et. al (2012) argued that the term jihad refers to struggle against your inner self. In the time of Prophet Mohammad, this term was much discussed by followers, with the Prophet saying the best among you is the one who fights against his own self and protects other human beings from the harms of his own self (Guidugli, 2013; Yildiz et al., 2012) — and is therefore called a mujahid.

Contrary to this view of jihad, scholars such as Syed Qutb, an ideological mastermind of Al-Qaeda, interpreted it as violent behaviour towards non-Muslims (Thorpe, 2015). In this tradition, jihad is divided into two broad categories: lesser and bigger jihad, with lesser jihad supporting the fight against non-believers and others who have conflicting interest with Muslims, and bigger jihad as fighting against oneself (Putra et al., 2014; Venkatraman, 2007). Muslim historian and ideological symbol Ibn e Tamia (Peters, 1996) argued that it is the duty of the state to define jihad against others. Under this viewpoint, it is only a legitimate government that can announce Jihad against others, while a single person or group cannot. Another historian and scholar of religion, Ibn e Katheer, defined jihad in the original sense as the noble act of a human being against his greedy self (Dammen-McAuliffe, 1988).

Unless one accepts Qutb's redefinition of jihad, a purported understanding of today's jihadist terrorism as religiously inspired lacks roots in the writings and teachings of Islam. Because the authors of this article do not accept his redefinition, they see political affairs and political supremacy — not religion — as the foundation of the jihadi terrorism. They claim terrorism is a sociopolitical movement to fulfil the interests of leaders and followers, and not a propagation of Islam as a religion.

Jihadist Organization

The Global War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq to eradicate violent groups uncovered documentary evidence of their organizational nature (Cullison, 2004). Further, after the death of Osama bin Laden in Abbotabad, documents were recovered that help understand Al-Qaeda's organizational dynamics (Bergen, 2012).

In their seminal work on understanding the response to terrorism among different societies, Mullins et. al (2010) claim that every society has a different response. The societies that are more prone to wars and violence respond to terrorism as an acceptable political struggle, while societies not exposed to wars take this as a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West.

It can be assumed that in a volatile security environment jihadist organizations respond politically by using violence, and accordingly adapt their organizational doctrine, strategies and attention-gaining tactics in that context. According to Roberts and Adams (2015), terrorism is an action-oriented approach that focuses on lethality and severity of attacks. Seeing it as a religious movement undermines efforts at counter measures (Roberts, 2015). The past decade has seen scholars, policy makers and other stakeholders question whether our world is moving in the right direction in tackling this phenomenon.

Jihadists define their purpose (Cohler, 2011; Comas et al., 2015; Fair et al., 2010, 2012; Fearon et al., 2003; Hoffman, 2006; Hoffman, 2009; McCrisken, 2011; Roberts, 2015) as being to create a changed world order by threatening the existing geo-political framework and, reflecting Islamic religion, applying shariat and a divine way of living.

Poverty within a society, the providing of economic benefits to poor people and promotion of grey markets are popular tools for getting support for the ideology (Raab et al., 2003; Shah, 2006). Like other organizations, jihadists in varied contexts adopt different forms of organizational design and structure. They adapt by taking on different forms. The literature on jihadists informs us that apart from violent activities, the groups also have direct and indirect involvement in charity and humanitarian activities; e.g., Hamas' charitable and citizen service in Palestine. Another example is the Falaeh Insaniyat Foundation (FIF), which is a new name for the banned Lashkar e Taybah (LeT) in Pakistan. This organization provides charity services in various areas of Pakistan, while its militant wing is involved in activities within Indian-occupied

Kashmir. By helping the society, jihadists aim to achieve a competitive advantage by gaining sympathy for their agenda and obtaining a positive perception of their violent activities (Flanigan, 2008; Grynkewich, 2008).

Jihadists exhibit the characteristics of bureaucratic, administrative and scientific oriented activities. Shapiro (2013) highlights the bureaucratic nature of Al-Qaeda, Al-Qaeda Iraq and other outfits while discussing the terrorist dilemma in hidden organizations. Similarly, Holbrook (2015) highlights the use of cyber space and its relevance to jihadist acts, and the role of information technology in jihadist firms that is similar to information-based modern firms. After the destruction of its training camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Al-Qaeda formed alliances and mergers with other jihadist groups in Iraq, Syria, Somalia and Chechnya, etc.

With the introduction of open-ended software programs, free telephony, web and mobile apps, the concept of lone-wolf warrior or self-proclaimed terrorist emerged. By using internet and applying learning and knowledge-based technologies, a single person is able to plan and execute successful acts of terrorism such as in the Madrid attacks in Spain, London underground bombings and the Charlie Hebbo attacks.

Sleeper Cells and Black Holes: the Emergence of Jihadist Firms

Hoffman (2006) suggests that jihad is an organized political phenomenon which also seems to be morphing into modern-day firms. Jihadists carry a purpose, and follow a doctrine and are managed intentionally on rational logical principles. Sometimes they perform such violent acts as suicide attacks, abducting people, ransoms and mass killings, etc. At other times, they are involved in protests to show their grievances and feelings towards a regime or state. The literature on Arabs (Bellin, 2012; Dabashi, 2012; Lotan et al., 2011) is witness to this even before the rise of ISIS and the conflict in Syria. It was the street protest phenomenon in Syria and Egypt that resulted in the long battle among jihadists and the Syrian regime. Within these protests, we witness sleeper cells and lone wolf mutations, as adaptations take place and self-organization continues. Non-violent protests are also emergent forms of such organizations.

A movement sometimes operates like a firm: securing funds for day-to-day operations, defining hierarchies and roles, daily recruiting new people and marketing their agenda while using sophisticated technology including social media.

The Tehreer Square protest of 2011 in Egypt ultimately led to the fall of the Egyptian regime. Similarly, the Shah Bagh (Bangladesh) protests of 2013 created political violence. Both protests were started by a few young people who turned into a mob and drew attention of local and international players. The protestors strategized the events, marketed them and created political violence. Another example is the Azadi March in Pakistan where young people blocked state operations for almost a month.

Varied Strategies by Jihadists

Jihadists are facing two dilemmas: Competitiveness among their various factions; and uncertainty because of counter-terrorism measures. They face uncertainty they never had to face before, such as drone attacks by the US in Afghanistan and Iraq, which have resulted the deaths of many prominent leaders and have led to the complete or partial extinction of certain factions. Jihadists, adapting, will develop new capabilities and skills that they never required before.

As we have seen, after losing the territory and stronghold in Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda adopted the strategy of aligning itself with different operative groups in different conflicts such as in Iraq, Syria, Somalia, and in Central Asian and African states. Al-Qaeda hence converted into a resource provider and knowledge provider rather than the front combat operator (Combs et al., 2006; Kydd et al., 2006).

Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) started its mission in 2007 in response to a military operation in the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan (Ghufran, 2009). It lost substantial ground following the Pakistan Army's combat operation in 2013 named Zarb e Azab. During this operation, the Pakistan Army was able not only to clear the occupied areas but was able to push the TTP jihadists out of the borders of Pakistan. Now, the TTP is attempting to establish a role in Afghanistan and is also targeting Pakistani civilians and security personnel. The highly condemned attack by TTP on the school managed by the armed forces in 2014 in Pakistan is an example of their reactive strategy. They started as a reaction to the Pakistan military operations in the Swat region of Pakistan and will keep a reactive orientation even in their future behaviour.

Since the overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban are hiding in various areas of the country. They act against the Afghan army and NATO security personnel in order to regain lost

ground. In recent times, they have used extreme violence against armed forces and pitched battles to capture various provinces. There are scholars who argue that the Afghan government is unable to maintain its acceptability outside Kabul and observe that it is threatened time and again by Taliban militants (Barfield, 2011; Giustozzi, 2008; Rubin, 2006). The Islamic state, or ISIS, was inspired by the Wahabi Jihadist agenda. It gained attention and momentum in 2006 after changing its name from Al-Qaeda Iraq and creating a separate organization called the Islamic State. In 2013, it proclaimed itself as the Islamic State of Iraq. Since 2013, ISIS has been involved in insurgency both in Iraq and Syria while also executing global terrorist acts — e.g., attacks in France and Germany. ISIS has regional ambitions in Iraq and Syria, while globally it is claiming itself as a substitute to Al-Qaeda (Gulmohamad, 2014) and is involved in locating new territories. Its recent foray into Afghanistan is a case in point.

References

Barfield, T. (2011), "Afghanistan's ethnic puzzle: decentralizing power before the US withdrawal", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 9 No.5, pp. 54-65.

Bellin, E. (2012), "Reconsidering the robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring", *Comparative Politics,* Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 127-149.

Bergen, P. L. (2012), "Manhunt: The ten-year search for Bin Laden from 9/11 to Abbottabad. Random House", *Broadway Book,* Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 148-150.

Blanchard, C. M. (2007), *Al Qaeda: Statements and evolving ideology*, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

Dabashi, H. (2012), *The Arab Spring: the end of postcolonialism,* Zed Books, London & New York.

Dammen-McAuliffe, J. (1988), "Quranic Hermeneutics: The views of al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir", in Rippin, A. (Ed.), *Approaches to the history of the interpretation of the Qur'an*, 48. Oxford: Clarendon Press, London, pp. 46-62.

Duffield, M. (2002), "War as a network enterprise: the new security terrain and its implications", *Cultural Value,* Vol. 6 No. 1-2, pp. 153-165.

El Houri, W., and Saber, D. (2010), "Filming Resistance A Hezbollah Strategy", *Radical History Review,* Vol. 106, pp. 70-85.

Fair, C. C., Malhotra, N., and Shapiro, J. N. (2010), "Islam, militancy, and politics in Pakistan: Insights from a national sample", *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol, 22 No. 4, pp. 495-521.

Fair, C. C., Malhotra, N. and Shapiro, J. N. (2012), "Faith or doctrine? Religion and support for political violence in Pakistan", *Public Opinion Quarterly,* Vol. 76 No. 4, pp. 688-720.

Farwell, J. P. (2014), "The media strategy of ISIS", *Survival,* Vol. 56 No. 6, pp. 49-55.

Fearon, J. D., and Laitin, D. D. (2003), "Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war", *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 97 No. 1, pp. 75-90.

Friedland, R., and Alford, R. R. (1991), "Bringing society back in: Symbols, practices and institutional contradictions", in (Ed.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis,* 232-263. University of Chicago Press.

Friedman, N. (2006), "Terrorism, Afghanistan and America's New Way of War", *Canada's Professional Journal on Army Issues,* Vol. 9, pp. 131.

Ghufran, N. (2009), "Pushtun ethnonationalism and the Taliban insurgency in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan", *Asian Survey,* Vol. 49 No. 6, pp. 1092-1114.

Giustozzi, A. (2008), *Koran, Kalashnikov, and laptop: the neo-Taliban insurgency in Afghanistanl,* Columbia University Press.

Grafton, D. D. (2011), "Defining the term jihād in the Arabic New Testament: Arab Christian identity within the current Islamic environment of the Middle East", *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations,* Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 235-248.

Grynkewich, A. G. (2008), "Welfare as warfare: How violent non-state groups use social services to attack the state", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 350-370.

Guidugli, M. (2013), "Fatwa on Terrorism and Suicide Bombings", *Politics, Religion & Ideology,* Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 159-161.

Gulmohamad, Z. K. (2014), "The Rise and Fall of the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (Levant) ISIS", *Global Security Studies,* Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 1-11.

Harb, C. and Fischer, R. (2013), "Terrorism and jihad in Indonesia: Questions and possible ways forward", *Asian Journal of Social Psychology,* Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 117-122.

Hazleton, L. (2010), *After the Prophet: The Epic Story of the Shia-Sunni Split in Islam,* Anchor, Ontario, Canada.

Hellmich, C. (2008), "Creating the ideology of al Qaeda: from Hypocrites to Salafi-Jihadists", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 111-124.

Hoffman, B. (2004), "The changing face of Al Qaeda and the global war on terrorism", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* Vol. 27 No. 6, pp. 549-560.

Hoffman, B. (2006), "Insurgency and counterinsurgency in Iraq", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* Vol. 29 No. 2, pp. 103-121.

Kydd, A. H., and Walter B. F. (2006), "The strategies of terrorism", *International Security,* Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 49-80.

Lotan, G., Graeff, E., Ananny, M., Pearce, I., and Boyd, D. (2011), "The Arab Spring| the revolutions were tweeted: Information flows during the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions", *International Journal of Communication,* Vol. 5, pp. 1375-1405.

McCrisken, T. (2011), "Ten years on: Obama's war on terrorism in rhetoric and practice", *International Affairs,* Vol. 87 No. 4, pp. 781-801.

Mullins, C. W. (2010), "Cultures of violence and acts of terror: Applying a legitimation–habituation model to terrorism", *Crime & Delinquency,* Vol. 58 No. 1, pp. 28-56.

Norton, A. R. (2007), "The role of Hezbollah in Lebanese domestic politics", *The International Spectator,* Vol. 42 No. 4, pp. 475-491.

Peters, Rudolph (1996), *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam: A Reader,* Marcus Wiener, USA.

Pham, J. P. (2011), "Foreign influences and shifting horizons: the ongoing evolution of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb", *Orbis* Vol. 55 No. 2, pp. 240-254.

Piazza, J. A. (2006), "Rooted in poverty?: Terrorism, poor economic development, and social cleavages", *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 159-177.

Piazza, J. A. (2009), "Is Islamist terrorism more dangerous?: An empirical study of group ideology, organization, and goal structure", *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 62-88.

Putra, I. E., and Sukabdi, Z. A. (2014), "Can Islamic fundamentalism relate to nonviolent support? The role of certain conditions in moderating the effect of Islamic fundamentalism on supporting acts of terrorism", *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology,* Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 583-589.

Raab, J., and Milward, H. B. (2003), "Dark networks as problems", *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* Vol. 13 No. 4, pp. 413-439.

Riedel, B. (2007), "Al Qaeda strikes back", *Foreign Affairs,* May/June 2007, pp. 24-40.

Roberts, A. (2015), "Terrorism Research: Past, Present, and Future", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* Vol. 38 No. 1, pp. 62-74.

Rubin, B. R. (2006), "Peace Building and State-Building in Afghanistan: constructing sovereignty for whose security?", *Third World Quarterly,* Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 175-185.

Rubin, B. R. (2007), "Saving Afghanistan", *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2008, pp. 57-78.

Shah, A. (2006), "Markets of Protection The 'Terrorist'Maoist Movement and the State in Jharkhand, India", *Critique of Anthropology,* Vol. 26 No. 3, pp. 297-314.

Taymiyyah, I. A. (1999) *Kitab al-Iman: book of faith (Translation),* Iman Publishing House, Indiana, USA.

Thorpe, L. (2015), "Sayyid Qutb and Aquinas: Liberalism, Natural Law and the Philosophy of Jihad", *The Heythrop Journal, 15 March 2015*.

Turner, J. (2010), "From cottage industry to international organisation: the evolution of Salafi-Jihadism and the emergence of the Al Qaeda ideology", *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 541-558.

Venkatraman, A. (2007), "Religious basis for Islamic terrorism: The Quran and its interpretations", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* Vol. 30 No. 3, pp. 229-248.

Wood, G. (2015), "What ISIS really wants", *The Atlantic,* Vol. 315 No. 2, pp. 78-94.

Yildiz, A. A., and Verkuyten, M. (2012), "We are not terrorists: Turkish Muslim organizations and the construction of a moral identity", *Ethnicities,* Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 359-381.