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IT ALL DEPENDS ON WHO YOU ASK

For those of who hold a non-Islamic worldview, it would seem best to err on the side of caution, and it would also be wise to take the Muslim politicians and Islamic leaders who make such volatile statements at their word, and then prepare accordingly.

The Islamic World and America have something in common. Since 11 September 2001, they have been allies in the Global War on Terror. For example, Saudi Arabia is currently fighting one part of the war on terror in Yemen (with the support of the United States), while America continues fighting another part of the war on terror in Afghanistan (with support from Saudi Arabia along the way).

When Did This All Begin?

On 20 September 2001, President George W. Bush addressed Congress, his nation and the world, declaring that, "The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends. It is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is *a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them.* Our **war on terror** begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every **terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.**"

Then, on 25 September 2001, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld designated the first

phase of this new global war on terrorism as Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).

With the benefit of 18 years of hindsight, it's not hard to see that the phrase '**a radical network of terrorists**' was a terribly misleading way to define the global threat(s) the world continues to face today. Moreover, its repeated use led to a long sequence of conflicting, contradictory, counter-productive and confusing Counter-Terrorism (CT) policies.

Since the first OEF coalition airstrikes in Afghanistan began on 07 October 2001, has there ever been agreement on what **a radical network of terrorists** actually is, let alone explain what one looks like? Sadly, the answer would have to be 'No.' To cite one example, since 9/11, several countries have designated the malevolent Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organisation, but many other coalition partners in the war on terror (including the United States), have still not taken that step.



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2001: Terrorists hit World Trade Centre in New York City.

This helps illustrate that the alliances between America and her coalition partners (especially when it comes to predominantly Muslim countries), have never been easy to decipher. While all sides – Islamic and non-Islamic – insist that they are serious about fighting the global war on terror, the respective definitions of who is a ‘terrorist,’ who is a ‘moderate,’ and / or who is a ‘radical,’ remain completely different (disconnected) from one another.

To continue with a review of President Bush’s 20 September 2001 speech about **a radical network of terrorists**, has there been a clearly defined protocol to identify **every government that supports them**? Has any coalition country agreed upon what course of action should be taken when an ally in the war on terror openly supports a Specially Designated Terrorist Organisation (SDTO), or a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT)? It is painfully obvious that not a single country has been able to clearly answer these questions, either.

So, what’s the problem? In 2019, it is not that hard to identify governments that support terrorist networks. One can start by looking at the policies of Saudi Arabia, which continues to support a vast network of pro-*jihad* Deoband *madrassas* across the Indian subcontinent. One can also look at Pakistan, which has received billions of dollars in US’ aid to help fight the war on terror, while also creating and supporting well-known Islamic terrorist groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Afghan Taliban, and even harboring Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad for at least five years.

Scenario I - Moderate or Radical?

Saudi Arabia was a chief patron

of Hamas in the 1990’s and early 2000’s, providing the Palestine branch of the Muslim Brotherhood with hundreds of millions of dollars. On 08 February 2007, King Abdullah sponsored an agreement between Hamas (represented by Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashal), and Fatah (represented by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas), that was signed in Mecca. The purpose of the Mecca Agreement was two-fold, to [1] end fighting between Hamas and Fatah in the Gaza Strip, and [2] to form a national unity government under the direction of Prime Minister and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

The agreement collapsed in less than three months (in May of 2007), and the resulting violent clashes between Hamas and Fatah ended with Hamas taking full control of Gaza.

In this particular scenario, who was the ‘Moderate,’ and who was the ‘Radical?’ From a western perspective, the Moderate would have to be King Abdullah, while the two Radicals would have to be Hamas and Fatah. Yet, at the same time, this Moderate ally was also supporting a network of more than 40,000 Radical pro-*jihad* Deoband *madrassas*, salt and peppered across the Indian subcontinent.

On a positive note (one that shows how different countries can sometimes work together as allies), Riyadh began cutting back its support of Hamas in 2004, partly because of focused pressure

One can start by looking **at the policies of Saudi Arabia**, which continues to **support a vast network of pro-*jihad* Deoband *madrassas*** across the **Indian subcontinent**

from the West, and partly because it disavowed repeated homicide bombing attacks during the Second Intifada. Incidentally, Qatar and Turkey continue to support Hamas to this day (both were original OEF members and remain cosmetic allies in the war on terror).

Also, on 12 September 2019, at least 64 Palestinians and Jordanians were arrested by Saudi authorities on suspicion of being affiliated with Hamas. In the coming days and weeks, it is expected that the Saudis will continue their crackdown, by arresting additional Hamas members, and by seizing their assets and property.

Meanwhile, returning to President Bush's 2001 speech, is it really possible to find, stop and defeat **every terrorist group of global reach**? Has anyone actually found, stopped and defeated even a single **terrorist group of global reach**, let alone every one? Again, the answer would have to be 'No.'

Eighteen years later, whatever the answer to that question is, the CT world still hasn't found the necessary courage and honesty to face it. With a toll of 35,620 *jihads* attacks since 9/11 (and counting), there are actually more Islamic terrorist groups operating around the world today, than at any other time in modern history. Meanwhile, the Taliban and its allies in Afghanistan hold more territory today than they have since the OEF alliance first entered the country in October of 2001.

Three Stages Of Radicalisation

There are three interactive stages that lead to what is often called **Radicalisation** in the West. The first stage, which begins at birth, is Tribalism. Libyan author Faraj Alasha does an excellent job of

discussing this subject in his 04 May 2018 *Qantara* article entitled *Keeping The Tribe Alive*.

The second stage, which focuses on children and young people, is the **Madrassa System**, which is reviewed in the May 2019 *Defence & Security Alert* article entitled *Madrassas Ingrained Worldwide*.

The third stage is **Lifelong Reinforcement**, which leads and guides adult Muslims to the point of full submission to the principles of faith Allah. The ultimate arbiter of true faith in Allah is, of course, the Quran, Hadith and Tafsir, but it is also reinforced by *fatwas* and strategic documents such as the AQIS **Code of Conduct**.

Islamic Threat Doctrine

The reason CT experts, Intelligence agencies, and policy-makers have failed to achieve any of the major goals outlined by President Bush

in 2001 is because they still refuse to acknowledge the clearly-stated threat doctrine of the declared enemy. The strategy (goal) of the Global Islamic Movement (GIM) is actually quite simple: to establish a global Caliphate, and to govern this Caliphate according to Islamic Sharia.

What is more complicated is the kaleidoscope of Quranically-endorsed tactics that are available to accomplish this goal, which range from peaceful invitations to become a Muslim (*Dawah*), all the way to full-scale warfare (*harb* and *jihaad*) against those who refuse to submit to the authority of Islamic Sharia.

According to Sharia (and the example of Mohammed), Muslims are obligated to make a proper declaration of war before initiating any full-scale military operations. Thus, throughout history, leaders of the GIM have provided written



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, right, welcomes Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan to Ankara, Turkey.

declarations (and regular press releases) that let the non-Islamic world know [1] what their goals are, and [2] how they intend to accomplish these goals.

Three examples include the Muslim Brotherhood's 1991 *An Explanatory Memorandum on the General Strategic Goal for the Brotherhood in North America*, the 23 February 1998 World Islamic Front (aka Al Qaeda) *fatwa* entitled *Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders*, and a 20-page document known as the *Code of Conduct*, which was released (in English) in June of 2017 by Al Qaeda of the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS).

Moderate Vs Radical Warfare

In summary, from an Islamic perspective, it is not considered radical for Muslims to fight and wage war against unbelievers. In fact, Islam was established by conquest and warfare 1,400 years ago, and this 'tradition,' as established by Mohammed and

One can also look at **Pakistan, which has received billions of dollars in US' aid to help fight the war on terror**

followed by the four Rightly Guided Caliphs (632-656), continues unabated to this very day.

According to the Quran, Sharia, and tradition, Muslims who try to avoid participating in *jihad* for the sake of Allah are not seen as moderates (considered a benign term from a western perspective). Rather, they are seen as quite the opposite - as stubborn, obstinate apostates, backsliders, compromisers, disbelievers, hypocrites, and treacherous, ungrateful traitors to the true Faith of Islam.

"And when waves come over them like canopies, they supplicate Allah, sincere to Him in religion. But when He delivers them to the land, there are [some] of them who*

are moderate [compromisers in faith]. And none rejects Our signs except everyone treacherous and ungrateful." (Quran 31.32).

*The term 'delivers them to the land' refers to land that is gained either by conquest (*jihad*), or by emigration (*Hijra*).

Scenario II - Moderate or Radical?

Kashmir has been a source of intense conflict between India and Pakistan since India was partitioned on 14-15 August, 1947. On 05 August 2019, India rescinded Articles 370 (1949) and 35A (1954), and announced that Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) would be changed from a State to the lesser status of a Union Territory.



Portrait of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-appointed caliph, painted on the Abode of Chaos in Lyon, France.

Article 370 had exempted J&K from the Indian Constitution, while allowing its own laws except in finance, defence, foreign affairs and communications, while Article 35A (*aka* the Permanent Residents Law), allowed the local legislature to select permanent residents of the region.

Before the decision was announced, India sent additional troops to the area, and told tourists and pilgrims to leave, closed schools and colleges, shut down the internet and mobile networks, restricted freedom of movement and assembly, and placed several Kashmiri politicians under house arrest.

These actions caught Pakistan completely off guard, and have set off a spasm of calls for *jihād*, not just from Muslim politicians and Islamic leaders in Pakistan, but also from supportive world leaders such as President Xi Jinping of China, and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey (on 05 August 2019).

Even before the decision, there have been many explicit calls for *jihād* against India by prominent leaders, including Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (AGH) Chief Zakir Musa on 08 April 2019, new AGH Emir Abdul Hameed Lelhari on 08 July 2019, and AQ Chief Ayman al-Zawahiri on 10 July 2019.

Since 05 August, there have been at least 20 public demonstrations per day across the region, and too many calls for *jihād* to keep track of, including Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) MPA Mufti Qasim Fakhri, Chief Minister of Pakistan's Khybur Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan, and near-daily public support of *jihād* (i.e., '*freedom struggle*') by PM Imran Khan himself (see here, here, here and here).



Indian soldiers patrolling the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway.

The Final Word

This article will conclude with a question: How should CT experts, Intelligence agencies, and policy-makers respond to the actions and statements of the Muslim leaders and politicians described in Scenario I and II, or in the cascade of calls for *jihād* against India?

From a western perspective, openly calling for *jihād* is considered Radical (as in Violent Extremism). However, from an Islamic perspective, calls for *jihād* come from the deepest heart and

soul of faith in Allah, and are thus seen as the very opposite of Radical.

As the question is pondered – *Moderate, or Radical?* – many will no doubt find themselves confronting the Great Paradox of Islam: *It All Depends On Who You Ask!*

For those of who hold a non-Islamic worldview, it would seem best to err on the side of caution, and it would also be wise to take the Muslim politicians and Islamic leaders who make such volatile statements at their word, and then prepare accordingly. 