

THE IDEOLOGY OF JIHADISM

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Jihadist is a term that has been used in the past three decades as a way to differentiate between violent and non-violent Sunni Islamists who have expressed the explicit need to rework governments and society in accordance with strict Sharia or Islamic law.

Background

The Ideology of Jihad is a violent, politically and religiously charged movement that was popularized globally after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and has since been used as the base premise for violent extremism rooted in Islamism.

The Arabic meaning of Jihad is *struggle or effort* and whose meaning varies with the context as well translation to other languages which has in turn since led to the widespread equating of Jihad to Holy War against the West and ‘nonbelievers’.

Jihad can therefore be understood as the determined effort to both internally and externally achieve what an individual or groups of individuals set as either personal, religious, social, or political mandate. Typically, a highly determined person tend to use all means at their disposal both offensively and defensively to fight and defeat a perceived enemy to their mandate which has over the past couple of decades meant the use of modern and violent weaponry.

With globalization, Traditional Muslims have consistently felt the dwindling of Islam and the erosion of traditional beliefs and practices giving rise to the Jihadi Salafism which seeks to create a utopian Islamic state by returning to the authentic beliefs and practices of the first generations of Muslims.

Thus, the Jihad Ideology is majorly rooted in the will of a minority of Muslims to have a say in how the state is governed; in creating a perfect state where all return to being like their righteous ancestors forsaking all acquired habits and practices from the West and nonbelievers. Jihadists have previously used education, indoctrination, and radicalization as well as political activism and takeover to install leaders in government with aligned goals. These practices have quietly evolved to violent jihadism which has, in turn, become a global threat in countries in the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

How Jihadism Became Terrorism

The ideology of Jihadism as a violent means to establishing an Islamic state or caliphate began with the urgent need by Muslims in the Middle East seeking to reduce the presence and involvement of America and the West in the region's affairs. Jihadist groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS opted for the violent route to attack the supporters of apostate regimes that prevented the creation of an Islamic state. The violent and bloody campaign embarked by the jihadists is what was exposed by Western media and as such became globally acknowledged. Thus, jihadism lost the original inclinations and now only being equated to violence against innocent non-Muslims and sympathizers as well as Muslims that had lost their way and needed correction.

Once, jihadism took on a violent approach, the leaders of groups corrupted the Islam religion by selectively picking Quran verses that supported the agenda and radicalized vulnerable, impressionable, and angry Muslims and converts with the promise of restoring order and avenging for injustices both historical, economic, social and or religious.

The evolving nature of Jihadism and its synonymous nature to terrorism has created a sense of otherhood where the terrorists are radicalized to see the world as us versus them/others where the fate of the 'others' is death and violence. This singular way of thinking has attracted members across the globe and as such fueling the growing threat of terrorism not only in the Middle East but also groups pledging allegiance to the ideology and the interpretation of justice and the only way to achieve it being bloody attacks to create provinces of a caliphate or just independent Islamic states.

The Principle of Jihad Ideology

The core principle of the jihadi ideology is to stamp out obstacles to restore Allah's rule on Earth and defending the Muslim community, against infidels/Kafirs and apostates. To this end, it is not only a collective duty but an individual obligation to protect the community from aggressors and Jihad should be waged by individuals just as is their responsibility to pray or fast during the Holy Month of Ramadhan.

Most groups seek to demolish any form of democratically elected governments and in their place erect caliphates or states that are governed by the Sharia law as well as a Caliph who is Allah's deputy on earth. This principle has led to the emergence of groups that either seek to establish states in their parent countries especially those away from the Middle East or the demolition of borders and creation of one great Islamic State divided into Wilayat/Provinces all ruled by one Caliph.

The natural enemy that the Jihadists seek to fight is the West and non-Muslims who they believe have corroded the ethics and traditional morals and practices that the 'righteous ancestors' held and as such they ought to be attacked both collectively and individually giving rise to single-cell and lone-wolf attacks.