

"THE CHOSEN"

**AN EXAMINATION OF EXTREMIST MUSLIM
NARRATIVES, DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGIES IN
CYBERSPACE.**

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SUMMARY

This thesis examines extremist Muslim narratives, discourse and ideologies over the internet by using content analysis to thematically delineate and reconstruct them for the purpose of discovering the argumentation mechanisms through which they become persuasive and appealing.

The research problematic is that dominant theories in social sciences and popular literature create *'taken for granted'* inferences that relegate extremist ideologies and narratives to the realm of structural contingencies, psychological pathologies, emotive appeal, manipulated religious ideologies, peculiar and unique rationalities or group dynamics.

This thesis hypothesizes instead the existence of a 'logical structure' in extremist Muslim narratives. This 'logical structure' is predicated on rationally persuasive arguments (*which employ epistemic and instrumental rationality coupled with inductive / deductive reasoning*) that appeal to any rational individual but are ultimately leveraged on for morally wrong *end state choices*. Unfortunately much of the counter narratives today seldom address this 'logical structure' and choose to address the more 'traditional' explanations cited above.

Themes and argumentation mechanisms stemming from an examination of extremist Muslim narratives in this study demonstrate the presence and workings of this 'logical structure.'

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE 'LOGICAL STRUCTURE'.

Indoctrination into extremism is something that has been researched and talked about ad-nauseum. Incidents in the news constantly remind us that extremism as we know it today is not relenting and at most keeps changing its face. We still do not have full comprehension of the dynamics leading to extremism despite the wealth of study and research that been done over time on this subject and also given that extremism in all its forms is not a new phenomenon. Explanations based on particular theoretical frameworks get shattered when enough anomalies force researchers to seriously rethink their perspectives. A probable reason for this is that dominant studies across various disciplines still ultimately revolve around visible surface attributes. By this we mean that causality is usually derived from observations that are most visible or the loudest.¹ The aetiologies leading to indoctrination have been usually relegated to the realm of pathology, misguided or manipulated rationality (religious or otherwise), group dynamics or overwhelming structural factors. The role of human agency when it is raised is still confined by the above three realms.

The research problematic in this study is that dominant theories in social sciences that choose to explain the rationality and meaning behind extremist Muslim ideologies

¹ This does not mean that in the social sciences, there is no attempt to probe deeper, but the assertion here is that such research is easily susceptible to observations that are the most visible. For instance, the most visible form of extremism that is prevalently seen in the media is depictions of religious fervor. Muslim extremism then gets easily associated with this surface observation. Or if an extremist is interviewed, if he or she feverently cites Islam as the reason for their views, it is likely to be accepted as the most probable cause.

are incomplete as they ultimately base their analysis such surface attributes. Little is done in the reconstruction of these ideologies to look at the nature, rationality and meanings that they seek to transmit as they are contextualized for a targeted audience, the process by which they are framed to gain resonance and the reasons for their appeal at the grassroots.

Thus this study is moving away from the '*taken for granted*' inferences that relegate explanations for the appeal of extremist ideologies to the realm of structural contingencies, pathologies, misguided or manipulated rationalities and group dynamics.

Labels and Definitions

The study of extremism and terrorism is a subject fraught with definitional fracas and variations. For the purposes of this study, Ashour's work on the *De-Radicalisation of Jihadists* offers a start for disentangling such perspectives. Later in the methodology chapter, the term "*extremist*" will be given thematic parameters by which such narratives can be identified for the purpose of analysis.

Ashour described radical Islamist groups as, "*...those movements that ideologically reject democracy as well as the legitimacy of political and ideological pluralism. They also aim for revolutionary social, political and economic changes and refuse to work within the established state institutions. Radical Islamist movements can use violent and /or non-violent methods to achieve their goals. Radical Islamists could*

also be called revolutionaries, extremists or exclusivists.”²

By this definition there are two components by which this study defines an extremist narrative. The first demarcator is relatively straightforward and that is the advocacy of violence. But this becomes problematic when we also include militant groups that see their violence as a manifestation of armed conflict or revolutionary war against the state and do not outrightly advocate attacks against civilians. This requires the use of a second demarcator which as Ashour had mentioned involves the rejection of “...*ideological pluralism.*” Now we can include groups that not only advocate the use of violence but also have an absolutist view that dehumanizes and vilifies other groups to the point of being supremacist. With this in mind, this study has also included in its list of groups to be studied, narratives from Muslim activist groups such as the *Hizb ut Tahrir* that have an intolerant, absolutist and exclusionary outlook. Their narratives at times allude to the advocacy of violence or support groups that do so.

The intellectual puzzle and research questions

The following questions form the components of the intellectual puzzle this study is attempting to solve.

1. What are the various extremist ideologies / narratives that appear on the internet and how are they delineated thematically?

² Omar Ashour, *The de-radicalisation of Jihadists*, (London: Routledge), 2009, 4.

2. What is the underlying logic behind the scholarly writings from extremist Muslim ideologues of the past³ and how have they influenced contemporary extremist Muslim ideologues? How are these ‘classical’ ideologies *replicated* and *interpreted* in contemporary extremist Muslim narratives and discourses?

3. Most importantly, all this culminates into asking what are the central features (themes) and forms of augmentation used to pitch these ideologies / narratives? Is there a form of argumentation that takes precedence?

Thematically delineating and reconstructing extremist Muslim narratives over the internet will illustrate how Muslim extremists actually interpret various issues. The central question that stems from this is how extremist Muslims are able to pitch their message in a manner that resonates with their targeted audience.

Nature and original contribution of study

This study hypothesises the existence of a 'logical structure' underlying all cultural, structural and human agency based factors that account for the appeal of extremist Muslim ideas and discourses. By this 'logical structure' we are not attempting to justify extremist ideas and actions but to discover how coldly logical or cogent arguments embedded within extremist Muslim narratives are leveraged upon. There is no need to manipulate this 'logical structure' as its raw existence alone can aid extremist arguments to be accepted among rational individuals. The ‘logical structure’ is inherent

³ E.g. Syed Qutb, Mawdudi, Hassan Al-Banna etc

and depending on the agency using it, in this case Muslim extremists, culminates towards violent recourses. Literature on this subject has alluded in the past to a kind of ‘cost –benefit’ instrumental rationality⁴ in the actions of extremists. But the extent of their rationality has been relegated mainly to this realm of achieving objectives. For instance there is an instrumental rationality behind why and how religious scriptures or the fears of people are manipulated.⁵ But seldom have studies examined how extremists systemically leverage on a universally accepted form of rationality in conjunction with other aetiologies to create the entire framing process. This is the critical lacunae existing in contemporary studies on this topic.

For instance a valid issue (empirically provable and rational) has to work in a systemic manner with other less rational themes (e.g emotive reasons) to produce the overall desired effect. We need to understand this system of framing and offer alternate solutions to the end state extremists propose instead of just trying to highlight the flaws in their argument. At times, some of the issues brought up by extremists can indeed be defeated by showing the flaws in the argument. But the arguments extremists employ even in a flawed issue is sometimes put across in a rational and convincing manner that leverages on empirical fact or universal values that resonate with almost anyone. For example, the argument can leverage on valid cases of injustice, repression and other

⁴ Robert Trager and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva. "Deterring Terrorism It Can Be Done", *International Security* 30, no. 3 (2006): 87-123, <http://www.globalcollab.org/projects/non-state-proliferation/1540-Workshop/Trager%20Deterring%20Terrorists.pdf> (accessed August 26, 2011).

⁵ James F Mattil, "What in the name of God? Religious Extremism, Fear & Terrorism," *Global Focus: Open Source Intelligence*, <http://www.globalfocus.org/GF-Religion.htm#muslim> (accessed August 25, 2011).

grievances or the actual experiences of individuals. This kind of corroborative rational argument forms a 'logical structure' in which other forms of argumentation techniques (*poetic, dialectical, rhetorical or sophistic*)⁶ will simply provide a force multiplier effect to the logical structure. Predominant theories and studies on this subject have addressed many of these other forms of arguments leaving out or just glancing over the 'logical structure.'⁷ Not recognising this 'logical structure' and simply resorting to finding and attacking the flaws in extremist narratives would amount to an attrition of arguments.

This has relevance to extremist rehabilitation programs that focus predominantly on the religious rehabilitation component. While this has had its successes thanks to the dedicated work of the counsellors involved, it can be further strengthened by looking outside the religious component. For a rational argument behind a misguided approach to non-legitimate and perhaps at times legitimate issues is the hardest to defeat.

This is not to say that other explanations from other disciplines such as psychology, political sciences and even within sociology is void but rather that they have negated or insufficiently factored the 'logical structure.' This study will also show how the 'logical structure' operates in an integrated manner with other already known aetiologies such as the influence of mutual reinforcement or the influence of charismatic authority figures.

The methodology starts with using themes covered in literature to demarcate

⁶ These forms of arguments will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.

⁷ The literature review on current theories on the subject will be described in p 51-79 of the next chapter.

extremist narratives. New themes are then identified by analysing the content of extremist website postings, ideological narratives and discussion forums. The study will then show how these themes connect with each other by the clusters they are grouped into and the rational aspects behind them.

The analysis of web content and ideological narratives is very recipient focused as it looks at the reactions and feelings that it is meant to stimulate and not the motivations and state of mind of the writer. Analysis of this type of data illustrates the thematic framing and argumentation techniques for extremist Muslim ideologies and narratives. On the other hand web discourses and narratives are especially important as they look at how these themes resonate back at the grassroots level. They also show how ideologies that utilise these themes are transmitted over such discourses.

The entire process behind the 'logical structure' argument is illustrated in figure 1. This will be elaborated on at the conclusion to summarise the entire argument behind the 'logical structure.' It is a process that will be tested through the analysis of extremist Muslim ideological literature, narratives and discourse over the internet. It is to be noted that the factors that generate influence (the arrows shown in figure 1) are bi-directional. This shows how each factor influences and is in turn influenced and reinforced by the other.

A very strong caveat needs to be made at this point. By trying to discover and show the dynamics of the 'logical structure', this research is by no means trying to allude

to justifying the heinous acts committed in the name of a cause. Neither is it meant to be another apologist perspective. What it does is that it will attempt to show how the 'logical structure' is not so much manipulated but is instead the leverage upon which extremist ideologies reach their objectives. To counter them we first need to remove this leverage in a manner that exposes the flaws in the means and solutions proposed by extremists. This is far better than ending up in an argument of attrition that either tries to show extremist Muslims as pathological or flawed in all parts of their reasoning which includes components that reside within this 'logical structure'.

Proposed solutions cannot simply be superficial and placatory as extremists may have already critiqued such alternate solutions in a cogent and rational manner to highlight their ineffectiveness.⁸ This is why countering the extremist Muslim worldviews is better served by first understanding the rational aspects of their critiques and offering viable and credible counter alternatives to the extremist solutions they seek through critical and open discourse.

⁸ Ashour 2009 also proposes a similar solution in his book but does not emphasize enough on the critical role played by rational aspects of extremist arguments. This will be discussed further in the conclusion chapter.

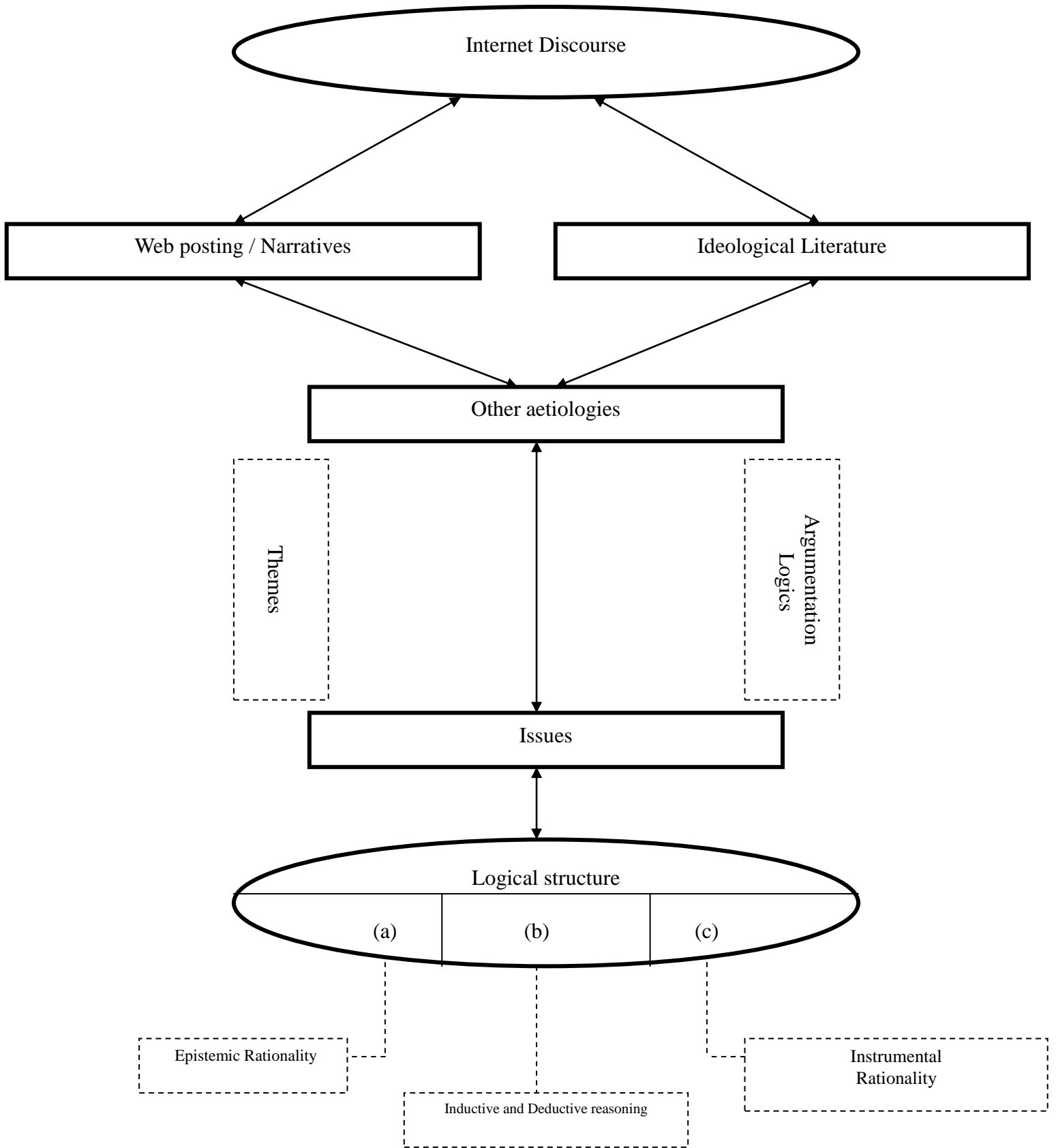


Fig 1. Graphical illustration of the 'logical structure' process that generates appeal for extremist Muslim ideologies and end state solutions. (Bidirectional arrows indicate the two way flow of influence and counter-influence.)

Chapter Outline

The first chapter in this study presents the key tenets and nature of ‘classical’ extremist ideologies juxtaposed with contemporary ones. This will be followed by examining the historical foundations and key tenets of Muslim extremism in the Middle East, South East Asia (SEA) and Singapore with a view to demonstrate its instrumental nature. It then goes onto describing theoretical literature from sociology that explains recruitment into extremist movements. The methodology behind searching, identifying and capturing the content of extremist websites and forums is then explained along with demonstrating how the theory behind this research is translated into a method for ascertaining the themes and argumentation logics used. The study then moves onto critically analysing local literature and studies on extremism as this is the most visible face of what we see in terms of local explanations to extremism by Muslims. The next chapter then illustrates what a framing process for extremist Muslim narratives involving argumentation logics, themes and the Habermasian ideal speech situation would entail. The bulk of this study is naturally reserved for what extremist Muslim narratives over cyberspace reveal. For it is in this unfettered realm that we see the ‘logical structure’ most visibly demonstrated. The findings are broken into three parts in which the themes and argumentation forms discovered are categorized into clusters. The first cluster looks at themes that are relatively more ideological in nature. The next cluster looks at themes that resonate emotively and the last cluster illustrates the persuasive techniques and augmentation forms employed. These findings will also incorporate looking at the individual repertoire of prominent personalities in Muslims extremism that left this lifestyle and who are now the strongest advocates against it. Finally in our conclusion, a

proposed framework for defeating the “logical structure” of Muslim extremists in presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW OF ‘CLASSICAL’ JIHADISTS, ‘NEW’ JIHADISTS, THE TENETS OF MUSLIM EXTREMISM AND THEORIES EXPLAINING RECRUITMENT INTO EXTREMIST MUSLIM MOVEMENTS.

The first part of this chapter will juxtapose ‘classical’ extremist Muslim ideologies such as that of Syed Qutb with some of the contemporary new ideologies made famous on the internet. This will demonstrate how new extremist Muslim ideologies by virtue of the audibility and visibility of the new generation of ideologues such as Awlaki⁹ isn’t all that ‘new’ to begin with.

This sets the stage for probing deeper into the tenets and instrumental appeal behind contemporary political Islam. Understanding the influence of political and social circumstances behind political Islam’s development cannot exist without trying to understand the nature of the fundamentalist thinking behind it and how it is able to transform even the mystical and religious elements behind the ideologies into a cogent and logical framework for action. The chapter would then percolate into looking at the political instrumentality underlying the forgotten episodes / anomalies of Islamist activism against the state in Singapore. This will set the context to do a histographical review of Islamist activism and political Islam’s influence in Singapore. This historical analysis will help to illustrate the instrumental rationality behind the aim, carriers and

⁹ Awlaki was killed in Yemen in September 2011 during a US Predator drone attack. Jennifer Griffin, "Two U.S.-Born Terrorists Killed in CIA-Led Drone Strike | Fox News." Fox News - Breaking News Updates | Latest News Headlines | Photos & News Videos. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2011/09/30/us-born-terror-boss-anwar-al-awlaki-killed/> (accessed May 14, 2012).

appeal of political Islam in SEA. The last section of this chapter will move away from a historical analysis and culminate into presenting a literature review of dominant studies explaining recruitment into extremist movements.

Qutb, Takfeeris and the 'New' Jihadists

The ideology of Syed Qutb encompasses the idea of Sharia as the unquestionable authority by which all aspects of life including a system of government should be based upon. Anything that falls outside this is “*Evil and corrupt...*”¹⁰. There is also no middle way. No “*half-Islam and half-Jahiliyah*”¹¹ Anything man made is prone to exploitation and would result in the self-serving authoritarian dictatorships that Qutb was all too familiar with. Therefore all man-made systems of government and political ideologies; capitalism, socialism, nationalism ultimately would result in the situation of “enslavement” by the one in authority. We need to take note of the foundational instrumental logic behind Qutb’s ideology. Its starting premise to a reader might already seem rationally credible as it only has to latch onto mainstream critique of contemporary political ideologies.

His work ‘*Ma’alim Fil Tariq*’ (Milestones) emphasises that Islam being of divine perfection would entail that political solutions based on Islam would naturally be perfect. This follows the kind of logical argumentation that if point A is true, then anything based on A is most likely to be true as well. This becomes problematic. If the emphasis on

¹⁰ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, (Egypt: Kazi Publications, 1964),130.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 130

‘Islam the religion’ is seen as the basis for extremist thought, then naturally any discourse on counter ideologies would focus on the issue of ‘misinterpretations’. The parameters surrounding the essence of the problem then take religious points of reference. This results in any logical / rational reasoning to be confined to these parameters for discourse by its protagonists. But if one were to examine the works of Qutb from the perspective of a political ideology, changing the parameters away from a discussion on Islam, we see the following.

One, Qutb’s emphasis on the ‘*Islamic Vanguard*’ to fight ‘*Jahiliyyah*’ society whether by preaching or by Jihad¹² against an opponent that will not “*give up their power*” without strong opposition,¹³ puts the emphasis on age old notions of political resistance. Other rhetorical nuances in his narrative glorify this ‘*vanguard*’ as being divinely guided as their ultimate goal is not just a change of political systems but to propagate Islam ‘*throughout the earth to the whole of mankind*’¹⁴

Such an intention elevates the position of the ‘vanguard’ from common ‘resistance’ to divinely guided agents for change striving towards the greater goal of saving humanity through religion. The emphasis of “*this world is not a place of reward*”¹⁵ puts the emphasis on the struggle and not entirely on whether the goal of political change will actually materialise. The latter might be implied as the end product of such a sustained struggle that will entail much suffering and persecution on the part of

¹² Ibid., 55,59

¹³ Ibid., 58,59

¹⁴ Ibid., 72

¹⁵ Ibid., 150, 157

the vanguard to lead *“life until death in poverty, difficulty, frustration, torment and sacrifice,”*¹⁶

Thus we have elements of glory, sacrifice and nobility of the struggle woven into Qutb’s narrative. The element of liberation is the other source of appeal. Sharia is meant to free people from *“servitude”* as it entails real freedom. This happens as this resistance is meant for all as a *“movement to wipe out tyranny and to introduce true freedom to mankind.”*¹⁷ It is no longer human rule with all its arbitrariness that is in control but God’s law which is impartial and incorruptible and where there is *“no vagueness or looseness”*¹⁸ that is associated with people.

Qutb had a global enemy in mind and that was *“world Jewry”* which he believed was instigating a world Jewish conspiracy to,

...eliminate all limitations, especially the limitations imposed by faith and religion, so that Jews may penetrate into body politics of the whole world and then may be free to perpetuate their evil designs. At the top of the list of these activities is usury, the aim of which is that all the wealth of mankind end up in the hands of Jewish financial institutions which run on interest.¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid., 157

¹⁷ Ibid., 62

¹⁸ Ibid., 85

¹⁹ Ibid., 110-111

One that is aided by the West and its long standing “*enmity towards Islam*” and how all its plans are ultimately a “*well-thought-out scheme...to demolish the structure of Muslim society,*”²⁰

Syed Qutb also refers to the concept of ‘*Haraka*’ (referring to activism)²¹ in his writings. Qutb had stressed how “*there is no faith without action...*” which accentuates the primacy of activism.²² The need to act is also elevated to the level of individual obligation as a Muslim.²³ Qutb describes how victimisation is to be expected from this. Something Muslims who have a perception of being victimised by society prior and during activism can identify with.²⁴ Thus demonstrating how Islamism’s defining characteristic and dynamics is centred on activism / struggle founded on a collective complex of victimisation²⁵ that originates from the individual. Wiktorowicz likewise

²⁰ Ibid., 116

²¹ John Møller’s analysis of Qutub’s work, “*In the Shade of the Quran.*”, in which he cites Carré to explain how *Haraka (Movement)* is referring to activism. See, John Møller Larsen, “Art & Activism: The Quranic Exegesis of Sayyid Qutb”, PhD dissertation, Department of the study of religion, The Faculty of Theology, University of Aarhus, submitted on 11 April 2006, 89

²² Ibid 92 in which he cites Qutb, “*In the Shade of the Quran.*” 4, 2215, *sūra* 17.

²³ Qutb, “*Milestones*” 1964, 42, “*When they have no such freedom, then it becomes incumbent upon Muslims to launch a struggle through individual preaching as well by initiating an activist movement to restore their freedom, and to strike hard at all those political powers that force people to bow to their will and authority, defying the commandments of Allah....*”

Larsen also explains how, “*Activism and the idea of movement is found on an abstract, conceptual level, in the commitment to the cause of the individual and in the social dynamics of Muslim society...*” Larson 2006, 94. This can perhaps extend to how personal identification can be formulated based on the reader’s emotive response to the content.

²⁴ Qutb, “*Milestones*” 1964, 11, in which Muslims who reject *Jahili* society, “*encountered nothing burdensome except torture and oppression of those who rejected Islam.*”

²⁵ Crenshaw, describes academic works on the idea of “*Collective rationality.*” This paper proposes that a collective complex of victimization is likewise a collective rationality founded on the individual’s complex

supports this argument citing how the activist Da'wa of al-Muhajiroun in the UK is not only about promoting Islam but rather the “*promotion of an ideologically inspired interpretation of Islam that demands activism by others.*”²⁶

What this all entails is that if one who is indoctrinated in the ideology as espoused by Qutb in Milestones, is asked why they fought, the simple answer that will first spring to their lips would be - ‘For Islam.’ Noble reasons will be first to be mentioned. Only when we seek answers past this surface response do we get to the heart of the appeal behind the ideology. This may arise from a myriad number of reasons besides religion like mutually identifying with each other’s personal grievances or experiences with a common persecutor, (either the government or authority figure). Then the empowerment that comes with group activism and resistance moves the individual from a position of passive helplessness to being able to do something about it. A final possible reason may be the promise of change and liberation. But for this change to be believable it has to be realisable. The extremist Muslim resolves this by clinging onto the notion that since ultimate reward is in paradise, such results need not be felt tangibly in this world. It is enough to recurrently fuel motivational ideas that see victory as the promised end even if suffering and failure is the tangible end product of resistance in this world.

of victimization. “*average citizens may adopt a collectivist conception of rationality because they recognize what is individually rational is collectively rational.*” Edward N. Muller and Karl-Dieter Opp, “*Rational Choice and Rebellious Collective Action,*” *American Political Science Review* 80 (1986): p 484 quoted in Martha Crenshaw, “The logic of terrorism: Terrorist behavior as a product of strategic choice” in Walter Reich, *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press), (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press), 1998, 8-9.

²⁶ Wiktorowicz 2005, 50

Many contemporary ideologues of today, such as Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Anwar Awlaki and Abu Yahya al-Libi in fact reproduce these 'classical' extremist Muslim ideological thoughts but apply them to very contemporary contexts to achieve resonance. This is done to the point they appear to be new ideologues to a modern audience.

Take for example the "three foundations," of al Qaeda's political ideology as described by Ayman Al Zawahiri ²⁷:

- "The Quran-Based Authority to Govern." – This refers to a government that rules according to Islamic Sharia and does away with "man-made" laws.
- "The Liberation of the Homelands" and the "the freedom of the Muslim lands and their liberation from every aggressor." Which of course rests on the idea that Muslim lands are either directly in control of dictators or anti- Muslim governments that ally themselves to the West or that the "Zionist – Crusader" alliance rules by proxy by supporting these regimes.
- "The Liberation of the Human Being" which comes about by the "power of the sharia based judiciary." This would appeal to anyone who feels that not only are they not able to critique their government in tangible and demonstratable ways that can see visible changes, they are in fact persecuted in many forms for attempting to do this.

The three principals of al-Qaeda as laid out here are very much in line with Qutb's idea of 'liberation' through Sharia. Be it of the person or of the collective. The

²⁷ Christopher M Blanchard, "Al-Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology in Congressional Research Service Reports on Terrorism." *Federation of American Scientists*. www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL32759.pdf (accessed April 15, 2008).

face of the enemy is not all that different either. Be it the regime of Gamel Abdel Nasser, world ‘Jewery’, the present Saudi monarchy, the rulers of Muslim nations who are allied to and supported by the West and the Western nations themselves. In the case of the Saudi monarchy, ruling by Sharia is not enough as they have betrayed Islam by siding up to the West. To legitamise the killing of such rulers, requires leveraging on another classic Islamic principal exploited by extremists in any era. That is the idea of *Takfeer*.²⁸

*Takfeer: "...the practice of declaring that an individual or a group previously considered Muslims are in fact kafir(s) (non-believers in God)" and in some cases legalizing the shedding of their blood.*²⁹

The *Takfeer* principal has manifested itself even in the contemporary world as epitomized in the words of Osama bin Laden³⁰ that to get at the ‘near enemy’ (corrupt and unIslamic Muslim rulers) involves firstly killing their support (‘the far enemy’, Western and colonial powers that support them) But this involves the killing of fellow Muslims who ally themselves to the West. This can only be achieved by demonizing and relegating them to the status of apostates or heretics. *Takfeer* here is used strategically to excommunicate Muslims who do not conform to their ideas.

²⁸ Excommunication of those who are deemed to be no longer Muslim.

²⁹ Irshaad Hussain, "Hermeneutics of Takfeer," *Islam From Inside*, <http://www.islamfrominside.com/Pages/Articles/Hermeneutics%20of%20Takfeer.html> (accessed April 21, 2008).

³⁰ Osama was killed in Pakistan on May 1, 2011 by US Special Forces, "Usama Bin Laden Killed in Firefight With U.S. Special Ops Team in Pakistan | Fox News." Fox News - Breaking News Updates | Latest News Headlines | Photos & News Videos. <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2011/05/01/usama-bin-laden-dead-say-sources/> (accessed May 15, 2012).

Takfeer can also take the form of indirect excommunication. Another related Islamic concept manipulated by extremists would be the notion of *uzla* or withdrawal from society.^{31 32} A prime example of this would be in Osama Bin Laden's explanation that Muslims that were killed in the 9/11 attacks indirectly deserved to die for choosing to stay, work and support the land of the far enemy. That in the first place, "the Islamic Shariat says Muslims should not live in the land of the infidel for long."³³ Therefore in order to allow for such collateral damage, these Muslims must first be deemed to be outside the realm of the *Ummah* (Global community of Muslims) for choosing not to withdraw from Western society.

The Takfeer idea was advanced by Sayyid Imam al Sharif who wrote books such as *AL-umdah* that inspired people like Osama and Zawahiri to the Takfeer ideology.^{34 35}

³¹ Shepard mentions that in Qutb's doctrine, "They must not mix in any other message, such as national liberation or social reform, and they must not try to justify it at the bar of *jahili* values. They must also separate themselves from the jahili society to escape its powerful hold over their minds. This separation is not physical but involves 'mixing while keeping distinct (*mukha latamaa tamayyuz*)' and 'emotional separation (*uzla shuuriyya*).'" See: William E. Shepard, "SAYYID QUTB'S DOCTRINE OF JAHILIYYA", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35, no. 4 (2003): 521-545, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/17499159/Shepard-Sayyid-Qutbs-Doctrine> (accessed December 15, 2011), 530

³² Qutb had also stated that the "vanguard' must know when to separate itself from the people." See: Kepel, Gilles. *Muslim extremism in Egypt: the prophet and pharaoh*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, 66

³³ Hamid Mir, "Osama claims he has nukes: If US uses N-arms it will get same response," *Dawn the Internet Edition: Interview with Osama*, www.dawn.com/2001/11/10/top1.htm (accessed April 21, 2008).

³⁴ MEMRI: Latest News," *MEMRI: The Middle East Media Research Institute*, <http://www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=SD178507> (accessed April 23, 2008).

³⁵ Ian Black, "Violence won't work: how author of 'jihadists' bible' stirred up a storm | World news | The Guardian," [guardian.co.uk home | guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk/home/guardian.co.uk), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jul/27/alqaida.egypt> (accessed April 23, 2008).

³⁶ This ideology can be seen in Qutb's works as well.

Qutb's alluding to Takfeer by the concept of "*Jahilia*" has been said to have allowed contemporary terror events to take place³⁷ as those '*Jahilia*' Muslim civilians who support such rulers are equally liable to have *Takfeer* pronounced onto them. Fareed Abdul-Khaliq cites,

We have pointed out in what has preceded that the spread of the ideology of Takfeer occurred amongst the youth of the Ikhwaan who were imprisoned in the late fifties and early sixties, and that they were influenced by the ideology of the Shaheed Sayyid Qutb and his writings. They derived from these writings that the society had fallen into Jahiliyyah (of kufr), and that he had performed Takfeer of the rulers who had rejected the Hakimiyyah of Allaah by not ruling by what Allaah has revealed, and also Takfeer of those ruled over (i.e. civilians), when they became satisfied with this...³⁸

³⁶ The Man Who Once Secretly Ruled the Islamic Jihad," *Political Islam Online*, www.politicalislam.org/Articles/PI%20901%20Special%20report%20-%20The%20man%20who%20once%20secretly%20ruled%20the%20Islamic%20Jihad.pdf (accessed April 14, 2008).

³⁷ Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh*, (1986), 65, 74-5 quoted in David Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, University of California Press, 2005, 139

³⁸ Fareed Abdul-Khaliq (Former Murshid of Ikhwaan), "The Origins of Mass Takfeer of Muslim Societies Lie In the Books of Sayyid Qutb", *Takfeeris.Com | The Origins of the Takfeeris and Takfeer Movements*. <http://www.Takfeeris.com/Takfeer/articles/ezjol-fareed-abdul-khaliq-former-murshid-of-ikhwaan-the-origins-of-mass-Takfeer-of-muslim-societies-lie-in-the-books-of-sayyid-qutb.cfm> (accessed August 26,

Takfeer thus serves a strategic function. Be in the removal of Muslim rulers as in the case of Anwar Sadat or to scripturally legitimize the killing of those who are deemed as enemies. This can include Muslim civilians who support rulers the extremists pronounce *Takfeer* upon. But we have to take the idea of *Takfeer* a bit further to fully realize its strategic and instrumental use by extremists. Often in extremist narratives over the internet, the ‘enemy within’ are alluded to as being the greater threat and the immediate source of the problem. For instance in the Iraqi insurgency, contrary to popular belief it is not the US primarily that is the enemy. The Islamic State of Iraq (Al Qaeda in Iraq) actually said, “... *Jihad against the apostates is a priority over Jihad against the original kuffar ...*”³⁹ The Shias are portrayed as the primary threat in Iraq as they are seen to be collaborating with the US and Iran. Likewise in the *Sallaifiyah Jadeedah* website, the following further espoused the priority given to the *enemy within*.

The Obligation of Fighting Them⁴⁰

Ibn Taymeeyah said, “Aboo Bakr as-Siddeeq (Radiyallaahu ‘Anh) and the rest of the companions, began by Jihaad against the apostates before Jihaad against the disbelievers from Ahl al-Kitaab. This is because Jihaad against these is

2011).

³⁹ Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI): “A Letter to the Knights of Baghdad” By War Minister Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, Released on: November 15, 2009; <http://www.nefafoundation.org/newsite/file/nefaal-Muhajir1109.pdf>

⁴⁰“*Limaadhal-Jihaad? (Why Jihaad?)*,’Umar Mahmood Muhammed ‘Uthmaan Abu ‘Umar, known commonly as Abu Qataadah al-Philisteeni. {Last four chapters of the book}, Statements of the Scholars Regarding the Replacers of the Sharee’ah”, *salafiyyah-jadeedah.tripod.com*, http://salafiyyah-jadeedah.tripod.com/Qital/Part_2.htm#ad-daar, Accessed Nov 16, 2009.

a preservation of what has already been conquered from the Muslim lands and to force back into the religion those who want to leave it. Whereas Jihaad against those who are not fighting us amongst the Mushriks and Ahl al-Kitaab is an additional manifesting of the Deen. Preserving the capital is given priority over gains. (Majmoo' al-Fataawaa 35/158-159)⁴¹

So the obligation upon every Muslim is to wage Jihaad against these rulers until they are removed and eliminated from authority over the Muslims. It is also obligatory upon all the Muslims to dedicate their efforts to preparing the tools of Jihaad as much as possible so as to return the authority of the Muslims to the earth which they conquered with their blood, then these accursed rulers came along and changed the faith and religion, replaced the Sharee'ah, and returned the authority of the Mushriks over the lands.⁴²

Also, know that these rulers are spreaders of corruption throughout the earth because of their hatred of this Ummah,

⁴¹ Besides the emphasis on the enemy within Islam, the other greater theme is the need to get back lost power that Muslims once held and to once again regain the state of supremacy. This seems to be underlying much of the extremist religious debates and rhetoric. We thus need to ask ourselves if extremist ideologies are inherently supremacist ideologies as well.

⁴² The enemy within more than anything else is blamed for causing the downfall of Muslims. This is namely referring to apostate rulers who have been bought over by the West.

and because of their ruling by the laws of Satan. Allaah
Ordered the believers to wage Jihaad against the spreaders
of corruption.....

This is because these rulers with their parties and
institutions of corruption, plant roots of corruption in the
societies, and use all their energy to make corruption the
life, culture and food of these societies.

Do you not see, dear brother, what the media ministers do?

They spread heresy and apostasy, immorality, vices,
beautifications of sins and fornication? They call to the
trash and mindlessness of destructive Shirk beliefs?

Do you not see what the ministry of justice does?

Legalizing the Haraam and sexual sins? Loss of rights and
completely changing things over? Where is there a person
who is sure he can get his rights or fend of an oppression
from himself through these courts which are run by the so-
called ministries of justice?

Then, do you not see these financial institutions which are
run by the government? All of its matters are based upon

Haraam interest. Noone (*sic*) is capable of securing his wealth except in these interest based banks. Noone is capable of carrying his trade on except through them. And all these loans, which they claim are only to improve people's living conditions, are only performed with interest.

Do not forget to remember and think about the insurance plans which are forced upon people if they want to use life essentials like cars and other things.

Also, do you not see the ministry of education? See what it has done to a generation of youths who have graduated from its schools and institutions? What have they taught them and informed them about? What, from Islaam, have they reared and nurtured them on?...

The idea being propogated in these extremist narratives is that the downfall and decline of Islam has been institutionalised by apostate rulers through all the social systems they have implemented. This emphasis on the enemy within has not changed from the time of the 'classical' extremist Muslim ideologues. In fact the narratives still refer back to them as in this case by citing *Ibn Taymeeyah*. Notice the argument now moves away from religious edicts to relating to what is happening in their society today and all the related institutions. Such narratives lead the reader to make the necessary

linkages to experiences, institutions and the social context they are personally involved in. Any personal grievance with any of the institutions cited, instantly achieves resonance with the narrative. This of course links the cause to the source of all institutional legitimacy, namely the ruler or the state.

Thus interwoven in many religious debates and narratives on Jihad and religious edicts and scripture, are these real world arguments which have natural corroboration and can be proven empirically as there is never any institutional entity that is infallible. The question is one of degree. The greater the personal grievance with the institution cited, the greater the resonance. The greater the resonance, the greater the propensity to ascribe the link to the rulers. When reinforced further with religious corroboration, it leads to the conclusion that the ruler is an enemy of Islam and the cause of societal 'corruption' that the reader might have experienced in some form or other.

When it is seen in this way, we begin to realize that despite the highly visible actions and loud rhetoric by Muslim extremists against the US and the West, the ultimate goal of Muslim extremists is still their own land. The only difference in the rhetoric of today's extremist ideologues, as exemplified in the idea of a '*Global Jihad*', is that it gives a sheen of grandeur, unity in efforts and cohesiveness of those fighting for a struggle that is ultimately local in its attributes.⁴³

⁴³ This idea is corroborated by what Ayoob mentions when he talks about how transnational extremist Muslim organisations such as al-Qaeda have elevated Jihad to one of the pillars of Islam and attract great visibility local groups may not have received before but the concerns of the local militant groups are ultimately focused on their region, see Mohammed Ayoob, *The many faces of political Islam: religion and politics in the Muslim world*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2008, 142-143, 147.

Another example of contemporary manifestations of classical extremist Muslim ideologies can be seen in how al-Qaeda ideologue Abu Yahya al-Libi made reference to the “*Hukm al-Tatarrus*” when justifying terrorist attacks where Muslim civilians are killed.⁴⁴ “*Hukm al-Tatarrus*” provides a utilitarian logic behind situations where civilians are killed for the greater good of Islam. To readers who might empathize with the logic behind such cold and rational calculations, this might come across as a persuasive argument. Al-Libi in this case has strategically leveraged on such established ideologies and applied it to the modern context. Barclay describes how,

One of al-Libi’s strengths as an al-Qaeda ideologue is that he is able to take obscure and dense theological concepts such as al-Tatarrus and re-interpret them for a contempo-

⁴⁴ “*One of the most important contemporary works on al-Tatarrus by a Salafi-Jihadist ideologue is by al-Qaeda leader Abu Yahya al-Libi. In his 2008 book Human Shields and Modern Jihad, al-Libi attempts to reinterpret al-Tatarrus for application in terrorist or insurgent campaign.... This relatively obscure piece of doctrine has its roots in classical Islamic jurisprudence and was traditionally used to establish the permissibility of a Muslim army attacking a non-Muslim enemy in situations where one or more of the following has occurred:*

- *A non-Muslim enemy preparing to resist attack in its fortress is holding other Muslims against their will as human shields.*
- *The Muslims are attacking the fortress of the enemy, inside which are Muslims who are not being held against their will but who are engaged in legitimate commercial activities with non-Muslims.*
- *Muslims are attempting to defeat a non-Muslim enemy who has entered Muslim territory and occupied positions around or behind them, and where the Muslims must recapture that territory or fight their way through that territory to defeat the enemy.*
- *Muslims are attacking a non-Muslim enemy’s ship on which Muslims are being used as human shields.*

While Muslims engaging in jihad are enjoined to protect the sanctity of Muslim life wherever possible, al-Tatarrus describes circumstances in which the obligation to fight Islam’s enemies - and in so doing protect the wider Muslim populace - outweighs the threat to those Muslim civilians unfortunate enough to be caught between the two sides.

It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that Salafi-Jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda have sought to deploy this concept to legitimize terrorist attacks that risk large numbers of Muslim civilian casualties. In 2008, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri referred to al-Tatarrus while discussing the Salafi-Jihadist movement’s stance on Muslim civilian casualties.” quoted in Jack Barclay, “Al-Tatarrus: al-Qaeda’s Justification for Killing Muslim Civilians.” *The Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor* 8, no. 34 (2010),

http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5btt_news%5d=36803&tx_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=26&cHash=26811dfccf (accessed August 26, 2011).

rary setting, but does so in a way that makes these concepts more easily accessible to a lay audience. Unless the audience is well-versed in the jurisprudence of jihad and the work of classical scholars on this issue, they will be none the wiser when ideologues such as al-Libi use the concept inappropriately or out of context.⁴⁵

The infamous Anwar Awlaki is no different. After his release from imprisonment in Yemen, he wrote a piece called *“Imam Anwar Al-Awlaki reflects on ‘vacation from this world’ ”*⁴⁶ in which he said, *“It was a chance to review Qur'an and to study and read in a way that was impossible out of jail. My time in detention was a vacation from this world....I still see my detention as a blessing and I believe that I am still enjoying the fruits of those blessings until this moment.”*

This might seem like a novel statement to anyone who does not have a background on the writings of Islamic scholars. But Ibn Taymiyyah while in Prison by the Mongols also said, *“What can my enemies do to me? For my paradise is in my breast; wherever I go, it is with me. My murder is martyrdom. My imprisonment is solitude with Allah And expelling me from my residence is but a vacation...”*^{47 48}

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Anwar Awlaki, "Imam Anwar al-Awlaki reflects on "vacation from this world" - Kavkazcenter.com." KAVKAZ CENTER, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2008/10/04/10249.shtml> (accessed October 14, 2011).

⁴⁷ " Khattab the Film [Archive] - Ummah.com - Muslim Forum." Ummah.com | Islamic and Muslim Discussion Forum. <http://www.ummah.com/forum/archive/index.php/t-11593.html?s=12a3753934f426006a4cc2be1330481b> (accessed October 14, 2011).

This example again demonstrates how, extremist Muslim ideologues of today are simply leveraging on the ideas and more importantly the inspirational words and actions of ‘classical’ extremist Muslim ideologues. To contemporary ideologues such as Awlaki, it is not simply about the need to emulate the ideologies of the past but to keep alive the persona and character of these classical ideologues by living out their roles and ideas in today’s context.

In summary, the contextual reproduction of classical extremist thought by contemporary extremist Muslim ideologues creates the same if not more persuasive appeal as it leverages on established rational arguments inherent in these old ideas. Narratives that contain either classical and contemporary extremist Muslim arguments base their rationality on effective concepts. These include established critique and problems inherent in contemporary political ideologies, the highly appealing idea of liberation or divinely sanctioned struggle for freedom, the idea of the oppressive ‘enemy’ that someone being persecuted can identify with, the empowerment that comes with activism and finally the instrumental and strategic logic behind old ideological concepts such as *Takfeer* and the ideas espoused in “*Hukm al-Tattarus.*”

The rise and instrumental appeal behind contemporary political Islam

⁴⁸ Ahmad ibn Abd al Taymiyah, *The Religious and Moral Doctrine of Jihaad*, taken from the book: *al-Siyasah al-shariyah fi islah al-rai wa al-raiyah : governance according to Allaah's law in reforming the ruler and his flock*, (Birmingham, England: Maktabah al-Ansaar), 2001, <http://www.kalamullah.com/Books/moral%20doctrine%20of%20Jihad.pdf> (accessed October 14, 2011).

An ideology cannot work in a vacuum. The historical conditions that led to the rise of contemporary political Islam also need to be taken into cognizance when examining the instrumental rationality behind its appeal.

The political and social history behind the rise of contemporary political Islam owes its success to the following factors. Firstly, the failure of old political regimes and systems followed by the prevalence of social ills and abject conditions of inequality that saw no hope for improvement. Secondly, the unifying force of political Islam against oppressive regimes that gave birth to the idea that the individual is not alone in his or her suffering. Finally this rising counter-culture also had utilitarian benefits that came in the form of Wahhabi sponsorship that created the gateway and impetus to more extreme versions of political Islam.⁴⁹

Besides the influence of political and social circumstances we also need to understand the nature of the fundamentalist thinking behind political Islam. There are three areas in Armstrong's analysis of the history of fundamentalism that need mentioning. Firstly it is how fundamentalism and its attributes can sometimes pave the way for extremism. Secondly, as Armstrong explains it, how the all pervasive mystical element in fundamentalist ideologies - the mythos (legend or spirituality) transforms into logos (logical reasoning or sayings). Finally, by looking at Sunni thinkers like Mawdudi and Qutb, and especially at the Iranian revolution, how charismatic or prominent

⁴⁹ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad*, (London, New York: I B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2004), 63-112

thinkers have shaped the form of Muslim and the role played by educated, middle class Muslims.

Armstrong when addressing fundamentalism in general states that it is trying to create a counterculture to whatever is the accepted mainstream. She saw the 60's and 70's as an onslaught by secularism against religious movements. Fundamentalist religious movements thus had someone to blame for their ruin and saw themselves as the savior for any form of revival. Armstrong mentions how the appeal of fundamentalism is that its ideology is simple enough for the masses. Fundamentalism arose as essentially a counter revolutionary reaction to the paranoia and somewhat legitimate fear that all secularists or liberals want to destroy them. Armstrong mentions how this constant fear needs to be stoked every now and then. Fundamentalists feel the need to re-shape their religious ideologies to inspire people to rise up. Fundamentalism is thus not just revolutionary but also activist.⁵⁰

In the Islamic system of governance, no one person or state is deemed all powerful.⁵¹ We can see why this egalitarian ethos appeals to those in authoritarian regimes like during the Nasser era, which was Muslim in name but secular in practice and to those in countries with dictatorships which look to enhancing only the privileged sections of the populace.

In many ways these Muslims who have endured notions of inferiority against the

⁵⁰ Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God*. Chicago: Ballantine Books, 2001, 243-246.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 237

West for sometime were now presented with just the opposite; where their identity as Muslims was supreme and central. Supremacy was in fact a necessary component to achieve this revolution. Qutb in fact said that there can only be toleration after the political victory of Islam and establishment of a true Islamic state.⁵²

In the book, *the Islamist*, Ed Hussain, remarked upon a speaker who had quoted Mawdudi on the objectives of Islam which,

Cannot be realized so long as power and leadership in society are in the hands of disbelieving rulers and so long as the followers of Islam confine themselves to worship rites, which all too often depend on the arbitrary patronage and support of those very rulers. Only when power in society is in the hands of the believers and the righteous, can the objectives of Islam be realized. It is therefore the primary duty of all those who aspire to please God to launch an organized struggle, sparing neither life nor property for this purpose. The importance of securing power for the righteous is so fundamental that, neglecting this struggle, one has no means left to please God...

...Islam is a revolutionary doctrine and system that overthrows governments. It seeks to overturn the whole

⁵² Syed Qutb, *'Milestones'*, 90 in Armstrong 2001, 243

universal social order. – Abul Ala Mawdudi, Islamist ideologue and founder of Jamat-e-Islami.⁵³

There are three tenets that these quotes allude to. One is the primacy and superiority of Islamic rule. Secondly any change would require a revolutionary struggle against the dominant elite. Finally, it is not just the liberty of Muslims at stake but their spiritual salvation in the hereafter as well as this very much depends on pleasing God in this world. This in many ways is what Armstrong is making reference to when *mythos* (legend or spirituality) translates into *logos* (logical reasoning or sayings).

Qutb according to Armstrong saw history; mythically and the ideals of the Muhammadean era as a spiritual Eden which is lacking in the modern secular world with its worldly focus. To Qutb, reason and science should not be the sole guide. He saw the Prophet Mohammed's life not just historically but as a symbolic ideal. In converting this *mythos* into a *logos* for action, his approach became more extremist. For example he supported the idea of *mafasalalah* or disassociation with unbelievers to ensure that corruption of the ummah is kept to a minimum, but courtesies and minimal cooperation with them are maintained except in crucial area such as in education.⁵⁴

Such concepts in Islam when taken out of context provide grounds for extremist ideals. But the point here is the importance of the spiritual (*mythos*) element in Qutb's

⁵³ Ed Husain, *The Islamist*, England: Penguin Books, 2007, 34

⁵⁴ Armstrong 2001, 241-243

approach and how he had after interpreting Islam according to his social reality, converted it into a *logos* for action. The question that needs to be asked at this stage is whether this mystical element, if present in extremist ideologies and to some extent fundamentalist Islam, is another source of attraction with individuals who are jaded with worldly logic.

In the case of the Iranian revolution, as with Qutb, mysticism and politics was inseparable. Ayatollah Khomeini had stressed that there can be no social reformation without spiritual reformation. Dr Shariati and Khomeini all believed that a political solution could not succeed without religious renewal in Iran. A lot of this *mythos* was employed by Dr Shariati. He described how Iranians should look beyond the world into the spiritual to discover their secret essence (*zat*) and how likewise they should be on the lookout for the ‘hidden imam’ call for jihad against tyranny.⁵⁵ How this ‘mythos’ to ‘logos’ transformation would actually work in practice was an entirely different matter.

Another feature of fundamentalism that Armstrong identified is the paranoia that accompanies fundamentalism and the need to demonise the ‘other’ similar to how the ‘other’ had done onto them. There is a deep need to make the bogeyman bigger, e.g. the idea of a Jewish or Government conspiracy, etc. Armstrong remarked how fundamentalist Jewish Kookist’s symbolic interpreted the initial defeat Israel endured in

⁵⁵ Ibid., 252

the Yom Kippur war, as a punishment from God for not expanding true Judaism.⁵⁶ This is similar to how Arabs viewed their defeat to Israel. Nationalism had failed to deliver its promises in the initial Arab-Israeli wars. In contrast in 1973 when a religious angle to the conflict was played upon, the subsequent initial successes served to highlight and provide grounds on how the Islamic ideology as defined subsequently by Qutb's Islamist philosophy proved to be a superior and more effective option.⁵⁷ This form of attribution of national defeat to a lack of spirituality reflects the "*deep fear of annihilation that lies at the heart of so many fundamentalist movements.*"⁵⁸ Likewise protestant fundamentalism oversimplified the aims of liberalism in a need to demonize the other. Protestant fundamentalism also similarly saw secular humanism as the enemy out to annihilate them.⁵⁹ Thus the attraction to fundamentalism is largely due to the fears that it plays up to.

When instilled notions of supremacy are combined with fear of the 'other' and coupled with the assurance given by the mystical, all that is missing for fundamentalism to be mobilized is a logical framework for action. Fundamentalist thinking in extremist Muslims entails all these components. All of which they try to validate rationally by corroborating it with political and social realities where fundamentalist fears seem very real.

⁵⁶ "Newt Gingrich: Be very afraid of a "secular atheist, dominated by Islamists" America (NDC)." newsgroups.derkeiler.com: The source for newsgroups news. <http://newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Rec/rec.music.gdead/2011-03/msg03093.html> (accessed December 15, 2011).

⁵⁷ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad*, (London, New York: I B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2004), 63.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 265

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 265, 270-272

The political instrumentality underlying the forgotten episodes / anomalies of Islamist activism against the state in Singapore

The majority of Singaporeans know little about intermitted episodes of tension and conflict between the periods after racial riots to the JI episode, which in many ways also set the context for the JI episode. These little known incidents have largely been erased from the social memory and collective consciousness of the nation. An examination of these incidents will show the congruence or divergence to mainstream views regarding the aetiology of such extremism. More importantly it will help shed light on who are the real carriers of the extremist Muslim ethic in Singapore. It will also set the context for differentiating between being Muslim and being Malay and whether these carriers of the ethic see themselves and their struggle as a Malay or Muslim issue. The historical analysis of these episodes will seek to elicit the aetiology behind Muslim extremism experiences in Singapore on the basis of disadvantages arising out of conflicts with modernity and competition over social control and power. More importantly in this section of the chapter, we will see the inherent instrumental rationality behind political Islam's aim, carriers and ideological appeal in SEA (South East Asia).

Communism in some ways offers us a good reference point to understand the development of Muslim extremism in Singapore. Communism's involvement with Islamic political activism manifested itself with the arrests of the editor and assistant editor of the *Berita Harian*, (BH - the Singaporean Malay newspaper.) Hussein Jahidin and Azmi Mahmud in June 1976. The mastermind since 1972 was apparently Abdul Samad Ismail, the managing editor of the New Straits Times group in Kuala Lumpur,

who was around this time arrested by the Special Branch in Kuala Lumpur. Samad was also the sub-editor of the Malay nationalistic newspaper, *Utusan Melayu*. Hussein was apparently indoctrinated by Samad who lent him pro-communist propaganda books. Also interestingly books that talked about the integration of the countries in the Malay Archipelago into one major entity known as "*Malayu Raya*."⁶⁰ The stance of their articles aimed to create animosity with local religious institutions, like MUIS by playing on Malay problems and religious matters and showing the solution as lying with Communism.⁶¹

Evidence of communal conflict intermingled with the political instrumentality of Islam showed in Jan 1982 when the arrest of ten members of a subversive group consisting of disgruntled Indian Muslims and Malays calling themselves the Singapore People's Liberation Organization (SPLO) or *Organisasi Pembebasan Rakyat Singapura* formed in October 1981 was announced.⁶²

The four core members of the group included the leader, an Indian Muslim called Zaiulabiddin Bin Mohamad Shah, 49, a member of the worker's party (WP) who had contested unsuccessfully in the 1972, 76 and 80 elections. He was also involved with

⁶⁰ Ironically this is similar to the idea of a Muslim regional caliphate, *Daulah Islamiyah*, which the Muslim extremist organization *Jemmah Islamiah* espoused in later years. See Elena Pavlova, "From Counter-Society to Counter-State: Jemaah Islamiah According to Pupji", *RSIS Working paper no. 117, 14 November 2006, The Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies*, <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/WorkingPapers/WP117.pdf> (accessed April 16, 2008), 11

⁶¹ Straits Times: 24 June 1976 & 25 June 1976

⁶² Account given below based on Straits Times articles, 11-13 Jan 1982, 21-23 Jan 1982, 9 Feb, 24 Feb, 5 Mar, 15 Mar, 17 Mar & "Countering Threats, Communal Challenges." *Ministry of Home Affairs, Internal Security Department*, www.mha.gov.sg/isd/ct.htm (accessed September 6, 2008).

personalities who had plotted against Malaysia during the Indonesian confrontation. Zainulabiddin was convinced that the PAP government⁶³ was suppressing Malays and Muslims in politics, economics and education. Again the issue was focused on domestic grievances against Malays primarily and Muslims secondarily as a cultural group rather than as an attack on the religion per se. Indian Muslims constituted a great majority of the members of the SPLO rather than Malays. Even though this was the case, the emphasis of the grievances was still on the Malay identity which acculturated Indian Muslims probably identified with.

The group had planned to distribute inflammatory pamphlets that were meant to “*arouse the sentiments of Malays and Muslims against the PAP government.*” These pamphlets were meant to be distributed at the National Stadium where 24 000 people were attending the Prophet Muhammad’s Birthday celebrations on Jan 9. Zainulabiddin and Hashim were arrested at the Stadium before they could do this. The pamphlet called on Muslims to not fear death in overthrowing the ‘*PAP fascists.*’ It also said that the Government was using Islam to achieve the political ends of the PAP. It accused the Muslim Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) of being a lackey of the government and for altering the true course of Muslim thinking. It accused MUIS of mismanaging Muslim funds and using it to hold lavish conferences at well known hotels. It also accused MUIS of doing little and being submissive in stopping the demolition of mosques and by accepting low rates of compensation. It also labelled the Malay PAP leaders as being ‘puppets’ of the government being used to achieve the PAP’s political ends.

⁶³ People’s Action Party (PAP) – the ruling political party in Singapore.

It accused the Government efforts in trying to promote Mandarin as leading to Malays not being able to get jobs. It said the PAP insulted Malays by “stabbing the national language in the back” and that the PAP’s policy was to prevent the Malays and their culture from getting a good international image. It added, “*The PAP fascists have even prohibited students from knowing that Singapore belongs to the Malays and that Singapore was handed over to Stamford Raffles by the Temmenggong in 1819....Go to Empress Place and look at the statue of British Colonist Stamford Raffles trampling on the Sultan’s agreement. The PAP fascists have left it there as a symbol of insult to the Malay sultanate and the Malays...if we are complacent we will end up like the Negros or red Indians in America.*”⁶⁴ Even though the arguments were peppered with religious lingo the issues as can be seen were more on race.

Some of the literature found in home of SPLO core member, Abdul Rahim, (who was also the Barisan Socialis vice-chairman in Singapore) was a collection of communist literature including works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao and Hu Yaobang the then chairman of the Chinese Communist Party.

The *Silat*⁶⁵ connection that was seen in the SPLO example resurfaced as a threat onto itself in 24 April 1987 when four persons were arrested for spreading rumors of racial clashes and actively making preparations for them on the anniversary of the 13th

⁶⁴ Straits Times, 22 Jan 1982.

⁶⁵ A form of Malay martial arts.

May 1969 racial riots.⁶⁶

Their main grievance revolved around the idea of the Malays being oppressed by the government and the government control of local mosques by MUIS. The reports in the press centered on their Silat associations culminating with environment minister Dr Ahmad Mattar warning about the twin dangers of Communism and Communalism.⁶⁷ As this incident was happening just around the time of the Marxist conspiracy involving the Catholic Church in Singapore⁶⁸, (I.e. Tan Wah Piow, Vincent Cheng) Dr Mattar cited the manipulation of Islam by Communists in the example of former CPM (Communist Party of Malaya) leader ‘Musa Ahmad.’ Apparently Musa “*used to head a special committee to train selected communist cadres in Islamic philosophy and lifestyle so that they, in turn could infiltrate Malay/Muslim bodies.*”⁶⁹ We can see a parallel here in much of the established accounts which cite how ‘moderate Islam’ is being manipulated by radical political Islam.

Review of Islamist Activism and Political Islam’s influence in Singapore

Political Islam’s main instrumentality is that it simply moves into the political space or vacuum created when other forms of opposition have been repressed or eliminated.⁷⁰ As shown earlier, there were even instances when Muslims were taking

⁶⁶ MHA press release dated 3 Jun 1987, Straits Times: 4 Jun 1987, 30 July 1987, 5 Jun 1987, 1-5 Aug 1987,

⁶⁷ Straits Times, 4 Aug 1987.

⁶⁸ Straits Times, 27 May 1987

⁶⁹ Straits Times, 4 Aug 1987

⁷⁰ Mohammed Ayoob, *The many faces of political Islam: religion and politics in the Muslim world*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2008, 155.

into the Communist agenda. Quite simply Islamist activism at that time was overshadowed by other more populist avenues of political activism – namely Marxism which held the political space for counter culture activism in the days of the cold war. Yet another gap is in terms of identity and what is loosely termed as pride and dignity. Muslims who lament at their downtrodden state are reminded about a heyday when Islam ruled and things were better for Muslims. Again this serves as evidence used by Islamists that political Islam is the solution that will restore their former glory and place.⁷¹

This notion was demonstrated again when examining the episodes where again political Islam and its ideas were seen as a means and platform for resistance against the ruling elite. The attractiveness of Islam to the common man is its promises of equality between all men and the idea that ultimate authority rested not in a capricious or unjust mortal ruler but in the divine and only in the divine. Even in the early days of Islam in SEA, it “*gave the ordinary man in the Malay world a sense of worth and nobility denied him in pre-Islamic times.*”⁷² It is thus easy to see the attractiveness of Islam to the Malays in its egalitarian ethos. It is therefore also possible that this rationale is also reproduced in contemporary forms of Islamist activism in Asia.

Aziz and Shamsul⁷³ also talk about the conquest of the indigenous epistemological space which entailed dismantling an ‘an entire indigenous thought

⁷¹ Ibid., 161

⁷² Azmi Aziz and Shamsul A. B., "The religious, the plural, the secular and the modern: a." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, Routledge Ltd* 5, no. 3 (2004), 344.

⁷³ Ibid., 345

system' with that advocated by the colonials. This was done through the systematic use of 'investigative modalities'. These 'investigative modalities' were namely through the colonial bureaucracy, judiciary and education. This ensured that Islam as a system remained inferior and subordinate to the secular colonial system of administration. Colonialism thus engendered in many ways the separation of 'Islam' and state which set the stage for future conflicts when the role played by the Islamic political economy was removed. Using Bourdieu, if we see cultural practice as being embedded in a particular social milieu (i.e. habitus),⁷⁴ or using Durkheim, seeing mental categories of these individuals presupposing social organizations,⁷⁵ then the conflicts that came make sense. This is because the overarching system that was political Islam was removed and along with it the corresponding hegemonic structures supporting Malay rule, namely the bureaucracy, judiciary and education.

Herein lays the first gap in the approach taken by literature on these episodes. It fails to see the conflict as a battle between political ideologies, akin to that of communism fighting against capitalist systems. If seen in this manner, religion is merely a force multiplier for propaganda and for their argument to gain credence. A force multiplier that because of its identity as a religion rather than a political system is able to innocuously infiltrate into the political agenda.⁷⁶ Mohammad Ayoob argues that the form

⁷⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984, 177

⁷⁵ Emile Wolfe, "Durkheim: The Dualism of Human Nature and Its Social Conditions," pp. 325-339, *ESSAYS ON SOCIOLOGY & PHILOSOPHY*. New York: Harper and Row, 1960, 325-33.

⁷⁶ Ayoob 2008, 156

of transnational political Islam is determined by local factors and grievances. This emphasizes the point that political Islam is not a homogeneous entity. It modifies itself according to the local contexts and grievances. Another school of thought he says is that nationalism defines the Islamist agenda. Again we see how political instrumentality reigns.

Ayoob also describes how Islamists have taken the mantle of the voice of Muslim grievances. When their nation states may take a pro U.S stance, they '*have become the primary vehicle for the expression of most Muslim's genuine grievances both domestically and internationally.*'⁷⁷ The evolution of Islamist activism culminating in JI in Singapore is a historical case in point about the primacy of domestic variables in its genesis but requiring the transnational for its continued survival, propagation and expansion.

The psychological profile of JI members done by ISD⁷⁸ as written in their White Paper⁷⁹ explained the JI indoctrination process. This sheds light on the probable domestic concerns leveraged on by these extremist groups and the social role they played. JI recruitment by their spiritual leader Ibrahim Maidin involved throwing in discussions about the plight of Muslims worldwide and connecting it with quotes from the Quran and Hadith (Sayings of the Prophet). Many stayed on not because of the search for religious knowledge but because of the sense of Muslim fraternity and companionship that the group provided. The JI members chosen were made to feel a

⁷⁷ Ibid., 168

⁷⁸ Internal Security Department, Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore.

⁷⁹ Ministry Of Home Affairs, 2003, White Paper on the Jemmah Islamiah arrests.

strong sense of exclusivity, belonging and self esteem. Little is said about what are the local grievances they cited. Except that the attacks were supposed to (according to Hambali, who was akin to the Head of operations for JI) cause ethnic strife, distrust and animosity between ‘Muslim Malaysia’ and ‘Chinese Singapore’, thus making Singapore a fertile ground for Jihad. But these two words ‘Muslim Malaysia’ and ‘Chinese Singapore’ give some indication as to what could be one of the grounds of contention and their worldview.⁸⁰

The lesser known episodes involving Muslim political activism and extremism highlight the following points. First, before Islamism or political Islam became the mainstay of resistance, communism despite its ideology being anti religion was a viable alternative. In some of these cases there was a strange fusion between the two as in terms of support. For instance the SPLO members reading Marxist literature and turning to Vietnam for assistance⁸¹, the former Singapore Malay newspaper (*Berita Harian*) editors who leveraged on Muslims to incite them towards Communism⁸² and the case example of former CPM (Communist Party of Malaya) leader Musa Ahmad who intended to use Islam to win Muslim support.⁸³ This is very much similar to how Vincent Cheng and

⁸⁰ “*Hambali wanted to provoke distrust and animosity between “a Muslim Malaysia” and a “Chinese Singapore and cause ethnic strife in both countries,*” quoted in Ministry Of Home Affairs, 2003, White Paper on the Jemmah Islamiah arrests, 11

⁸¹ Collection of Communist literature found with SPLO members include works of Marx, Engles, Lenin, Mao and Hu Yaobing. (Former Chairman of Chinese Communist Party) Some of these works had Malay translations, cited in Straits Times, 22 Jan 1982.

⁸² ‘Azmi Mahmud, Assistant Editor of *Berita Harian* (BH) and editor Hussein Jahidin, “...our aim was to arouse anger among Muslims...and to influence them towards Communism...”, “...the ‘Cenderawasih column in BH was to ‘divert the attention of the Malays from religious matters and to make them more aware of the real problems of society and life...’ ” Straits Times, 24 June 1976,

⁸³ “*Former CPM leader Musa Ahmad used to head a special committee to train selected communist cadres*

Kevin De Souza in the Singapore Marxist conspiracy of 1987 leveraged on religion by promoting Marxist literature during Bible study classes.⁸⁴ This alliance between Marxism and Islamists was probably because there was a common enemy, the capitalist secular state and Islamists ideologies also allude to the Marxist concept of a ‘vanguard’. As in the case of the Iranian revolution, there is evidence to show the existence of ‘ideological convergence’ and use of Marxist terminology and concepts in extremist Muslim narratives.⁸⁵

Secondly, as in the arrests of the BH editors example, Malay nationalism and the issues to do with their loss of power and marginalization were more at the forefront than the threat to Islam. Long before the JI aim of forming *Daulah Islamiah Nasantara* (Islamic Caliphate in SEA), there was the idea of the ‘*Melayu Raja*’, the nationalistic precursor to the Islamist version. Thirdly, racial and communal politics were the key instigators rather than any intrinsic need to have an Islamic state and to propagate Islamist ideals. Wahhabi and Muslim reformist puritan ideas in fact took a backseat in the episode involving the extremist Silat groups. A puritan Wahhabi would have balked at the syncretic form combining Islam and mysticism as in the Silat ‘magical’ rituals to arm the extremists in the Silat group for racial conflict. Finally the focus of these episodes seemed to center on raising and instigating class consciousness. What this study postulates is that the carriers of Islamist political activism in Singapore were not always

in Islamic philosophy and lifestyle so that they, in turn could infiltrate Malay / Muslim bodies,” quoted in Straits Times, 4 Aug 1987.

⁸⁴ Straits Times, 27 May 1987.

⁸⁵ “Borrowing Ideology: Marxists Becoming Muslims during The 1979 Revolution in Iran” , *Islamspedia.com - Islamic Web Ontologies*, <http://www.islamspedia.com/2008/08/borrowing-ideology-marxists-becoming.html>, (Accessed 26 Aug 2011.)

Islamists to begin with. It was more Malay nationalism and communalism that were the main drivers of dissent. Political Islam as and when it developed was essentially used as the force multiplier.

The Instrumental rationality behind the aim, carriers and appeal of political Islam in SEA

The appeal behind Muslim reformist ideas was that in many ways it was considered progressive and egalitarian. Take for instance Muhammad Abduh's ideas about the importance of the intellectual strengthening of the Muslim community which the *Muhammadiyah* association⁸⁶ in Indonesia advocated strongly. Reformists thus place little importance on traditional authority, religious (*tarekat*) or otherwise.⁸⁷ Even in the early days of Islam in SEA, it "gave the ordinary man in the Malay world a sense of worth and nobility denied him in pre-Islamic times."⁸⁸

It needs to be clarified that the *Kaum Muda* (new Muslim reformists in SEA) in the early part of the 20th century were primarily against *Kaum Tua* (traditional Muslim religious scholars and elite in SEA) for a variety of different reasons, and not primarily

⁸⁶ An example of those in the reformist camp which started in 1912 and is today the second largest Islamic organization in Indonesia (just behind its traditional rival Nahdatul Ulama which was a response to reformist growth) see *Muhammadiyah*. "Div. of Religion and Philosophy, St. Martin College, UK, <http://philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/indon/muham.html>, (Accessed Nov 8, 2008)

⁸⁷ James J. Fox, "Islam in Indonesia", *Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University*, http://72.14.235.104/search?q=cache:3hAf6WJazfEJ:rspas.anu.edu.au/papers/anthropology/04_fox_islam_indonesia.pdf+Currents+in+Contemporary+Islam+in+Indonesia&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1 (accessed September 7, 2008), 4-5

⁸⁸ Aziz & Shamsul, 344

because they were pro-state. Reformist newspapers in the 1920's such as the Singapore Based *Al-Imam* advocated *ijtihad* (informed independent investigation) as compared to what they considered the *Kaum Tua's taklid buta*. (Blind acceptance of intermediate authority.) Roff, states that *Al-Imam's* attack was not on the British but rather on the Malay people themselves.⁸⁹ Attacks were also on the “*orang-orang besar*” (Malay noble class) who were seen as being ‘bribed’ by the colonial powers. They were also vilified for their misdeeds and negative attitudes towards their own people.⁹⁰ Simply put they believed that the backwardness of Malay society was because of the abuse of power by its own ruling class and the existing institutions that support it. Looking at these statements we can see how Muslim activist contentions have not changed much over time.

A very clear distinction needs to be made at this stage as to what constitutes as social reform as contrasted with political reform. Eliraz mentions how the Malay – Indonesian Islamic modernist movements took ideas such as that of early reformist Muhammad Abduh which were mainly on religious and social reform to a politicized version that challenged traditional authorities. He states that it ‘*transcended the Islamic Religious Sphere, to include educational, social and political aspects.*’⁹¹ This can be seen in how the weakness and threats being posed to the Islamic community were framed, namely due to a decline and corruption of Islamic values and mode of conduct. Therefore social / religious reform was needed. But this could not be achieved until there

⁸⁹ Roff in Abu Bakar Hamzah, *Al-Imam: Its role in Malay society, 1905-1908*, Singapore: Pustaka Antara, 1991, 12

⁹⁰ Hamzah, 89

⁹¹ Giora Eliraz, *Islam In Indonesia: Modernism, Radicalism, And The Middle East Dimension*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004, 24

was political reform.

It is easy to see how Islamic reformists by opposing the traditional *Ulema* were in fact opposing the establishment's local proxy. This has historical roots as to how the traditional *Ulemas* were given positions of power and economic privileges assigned to that of an elite class by the Sultans who used them to legitimate their authority through theological support.⁹² This arises from the fact that the *Ulema* were traditionally seen in Malay Muslim society as the ‘*protectors of the word of God.*’⁹³ The traditional *Ulema* in Malaysia also espoused the ideas by Islamic scholar Al-Ghazali who saw the Sultan as ‘God’s Shadow on Earth’⁹⁴ and chastised any resistance to this authority even if the monarch was evil and oppressive. Reform should instead be within their hearts and this is only possible when there is no violence and disharmony in the outside world, even if passive acceptance of autocratic rule is necessary.⁹⁵

Thus in Malaya when Islam was introduced, it is possible that its early form only entrenched the idea of *kerajaan*. (Malay Political system which centers on Kingship and pre-Islamic ideas of divine kingship)⁹⁶ It is also possible that this would seem to the reformists and extremists of later years to be replicated with the contemporary state sanctioned *Ulemas* of today. They may be viewed by today’s Muslim extremists in SEA as lackeys who believe it was wrong to oppose the state and who might even be alluding

⁹² Mohamad Osman and Mohamad Nawam. "Towards a History of Malaysian Ulama." *RSIS Working Papers* 122 (2007), 7

⁹³ *Ibid*, 3

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 3

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 4

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 6

to the old idea of *kerajaan*, but this time with the secular modern state instead.

While essentially reformist, there were radical elements within the *Kaum Muda* that opposed the state for political reasons. Take for instance the Muslim reformist magazine *Al-Imam* (1906-1908). Its main aim was to critique the un-Islamic practices and outdated teaching methods prevalent with the conservative *ulema* (scholars). In particular it highlighted the un-Islamic practices, corrupt lifestyles and values of the ruling elite. Its religious focus transcended to covering political, economic and social issues of the Malays.⁹⁷

Al-Imam's main focus although in religious matters and religious reawakening easily flowed into the political sphere as the main tenant of reformists was that Islam governed all matters including politics and that it was the cure for all ills of the community.⁹⁸ Hamzah quotes William R. Roff in saying that Al-Imam cited the root cause of Malay decline to non-compliance and ignorance with regards to the following of Islamic laws and doctrine. They saw compliance with the tenants of Islam as the only means of competing with those who rule.⁹⁹ But since the reformist agenda did not distinguish the religious space from the political, the tenets on its political programs were quite direct. Al-Imam clearly says that its political programme is "*to introduce and advocate Islamic political philosophy.....to help achieve independence for every Muslim Umma (Nation) from both colonial powers and Satanic forces acting behind the curtain*

⁹⁷ "Al Imam." Singapore: The Encyclopedia. http://www.singapedia.com.sg/entries/a/al_imam.html (accessed June 5, 2012).

⁹⁸ Hamzah, 3

⁹⁹ Hamzah, 9

in every secular state”¹⁰⁰

In pre-Islamic times, *kerajaan* entailed looking at rulers as something almost divine that cannot be opposed. This is almost in the same vein as the Gazalian idea of not opposing rulers lest it causes social strife. Thus is it plausible to infer parallels in how traditional Ulema (pre-Islamic, Early Islamic, Modern Era) have viewed the ‘ruler’ and in contemporary times, the state. The bottom line of the traditional ulema across the various eras is the need to conform. It is again not impossible that the same social and political grievances of the past as described have manifested themselves to a contemporary Singaporean Muslim counter-culture. In this case, MUIS is seen akin to the traditional Ulema who similarly support their ‘ruler’ which today is represented by the state. The traditional ulema are seen as lackeys of the state and the idea of lackey rulers continues to this day in Muslim extremist narratives in SEA.

Another replicated grievance is that of ethnic marginalization and lack of political representation. There is evidence to show that these same social and political grievances of the past have manifested themselves to a contemporary Singaporean Muslim counter-culture. Take for example the UK based Islamic Human Rights Commission’s article in the website entitled, “Singapore, ethnic chauvinism and Malay-Muslim population.”¹⁰¹ In the article it was quoted,

¹⁰⁰ Al Imam Vol 1 no 1 (23 July 1906), Vol 2 no 9 (5 March 1908), Vol 2 no 12 (4 June 1908) in Hamzah, 81-82.

¹⁰¹ "IHRC - Briefing: Singapore, ethnic chauvinism and the Malay-Muslim population", *Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC)*, <http://www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=776> (accessed November 1, 2011).

“Detractors of the PAP government within Singapore’s Malay-Muslim community accuse it of Islamophobia and disrespecting minority cultures. This criticism is part of the wider concern held by Singapore’s substantial minority groups as to ethnic Chinese hegemony over public and private institutions....”

The article then goes on to cite examples of the ruling party PAP’s prohibition on ethnic and religious discussion, how senior political leaders reveal their Islamophobia, discrimination in the education system over the headscarf issue and other incidents of Islamophobia and ethnic chauvinism in Singapore. It concludes by saying

...IHRC calls for a more inclusive Singapore, in which diversity and opportunity of equality is afforded to all of citizens, irrespective of ethnicity and religion. IHRC further calls upon the current Singaporean government to acknowledge the existence of institutionalised racism within its own structures and throughout wider Singaporean society. This has to be accompanied by an end to Sinocentric policies and programmes, and parity in the allocation of state resources towards the Malay-Muslim and Indian populations.

This shows how grievances relating to ethnic marginalization amongst

Singaporean Muslims in this case are still part of the active discourse by some segments of this population. Old grievances get reproduced whenever new social and political economic policies and narratives create this impression through rationally constructed arguments which they corroborate through actual issues and incidents. These are the very impressions that extremist Muslims easily leverage upon, especially when such rationally constructed components of the argument are not addressed directly.

In summary we see an instrumental rationality behind extremist Muslims in Singapore and SEA choosing to adopt political Islam as the vehicle for social and political change. The first aspect of this instrumental rationality rests with the notion that is it seen as a political system that puts Muslims first and advocates the reclaiming of lost hegemony and supremacy. Secondly, political Islam has the capacity to create natural resonance with the Muslim masses on the basis of religious identity and because of this gains legitimacy. Finally it was seen as the only viable form of resistance that directly confronted those Muslims seen as lackeys to the state, theoretically promised an egalitarian future without privileged classes and challenged a social and political system that they felt ultimately reproduced their marginalized position.

With this historical context behind political Islam in mind, we can now delve in the dominant contemporary theories in social sciences that have attempted to explain recruitment into extremist Muslim movements.

Literature review of studies explaining recruitment into extremist movements

The historical development of extremist Muslim ideologies highlights how they can also be seen as a form of political radicalism. Political radicalism has been described to refer to the ideological mindset that seeks sweeping restructuring of political, social systems and established norms. As such it can represent legitimate political thought as evidenced by its historical association with left or right wing political groups and even non-violent reformist groups.¹⁰² But the processes involved in political radicalisation can also lead to social polarisation, pose a threat to the democratic legal order and sometimes advocates the use of violence.¹⁰³ This can equally apply to either religious or secular radical political groups as they share the same absolutist model.¹⁰⁴ Radicalization in this sense is characterized by an idea of resistance to the established structure. This requires taking on an absolutist confrontational worldview that percolates down to advocating extreme measures. Radical political activist groups and militant groups therefore share this foundational mindset. With this in mind, this section will be analysing major theoretical approaches that explain recruitment into social movements (*militant or otherwise*) that share this foundational mindset towards extremism.

¹⁰² Alonso et. al., "Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism," *A concise Report prepared by the European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation*, www.rikcoolsaet.be/files/art_ip_wz/Expert%20Group%20Report%20Violent%20Radicalisation%20FINAL.pdf, (Accessed 6 May 2008), 5

¹⁰³ Jorgen Staun, "Radicalisation, recruitment and the EU counter-radicalisation strategy", Copenhagen, Denmark: COT Institute for Safety, Security and Crisis Management; The Hague, DIIS (Danish Institute for International Studies), 2008. 8,13.

¹⁰⁴ Left wing terror as evidenced by the *Baader Meinhof* gang see (BBC NEWS | Europe | "Who were the Baader-Meinhof gang?", *BBC NEWS | News Front Page*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6314559.stm>, (Accessed May 8 2009)] and terror by Right Wing Militias in the US (Knight, Danielle. "Nation & World: 60 right-wing terror plots foiled - US News and World Report", *US News & World Report - Breaking News, World News, Business News, and America's Best Colleges - USNews.com*, <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/050712/12natsec.htm>, (Accessed May 8 2009)), show that the use of terrorism as a political tactic is not endemic or starts with Muslim radicals.

The current trend in explaining radicalisation allocates it to marginalized individuals looking for a sense of identity and the enormous role played by social / 'peer' pressure. Raghu Rahman in his article quoted Tina Rosenberg, a Pulitzer winning journalist who associated combating terrorism to other social ills such as alcoholism and drug abuse. Rahman takes an almost medicalisation approach to the problem in that a 'social cure' needs to be 'administered' by qualified professionals within society who believe in the state ethos of "country first – caste/religion/self later."¹⁰⁵

The problem with this dominant approach today is that it almost negates the presence of any form of rational arguments that point to valid grievances and the lack of recourse to any viable solution. Most contemporary theories such as those which will be highlighted in this section overlook the instrumental rationality of the extremist approach¹⁰⁶ and the enormous persuasiveness behind logical / rational components embedded in their arguments.

Furthermore, most explanations cited in the media despite looking at social causes, somehow allude to pathological reasons as an ever present component that might vary in degrees. For instance Mohamed Osman Mohamud, the apparently well adjusted American teenager who planned to bomb the Christmas tree-lighting ceremony in Port-

¹⁰⁵ Raghu Raman, "Terrorism, some lessons from medicine", *Livemint.com - the Wall Street Journal*, www.livemint.com/2011/10/05233413/Terrorism-some-lessons-from-m.html?h=B (accessed November 1, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ With the exception of rational choice theories which look at instrumental rationality.

land in November 2010, had apparently felt betrayed by his parents who reported him to the authorities when he had increasingly extreme views. The news article also quoted Professor of Sociology, Cawo Abdi who attributed his radicalisation to one of 'looking to fit in' and akin to joining gangs after being influenced by the internet. Osman was also described as doing well in school and being obedient.¹⁰⁷ While all this might seem like a 'smoking gun' that points to psychological influences and social peer pressure, nothing was ever revealed about the issues and extremist arguments that found resonance with him. The other side of this radicalisation equation remained a mystery while alluding to his sociopathological and psychopathological aspects which were visibly announced in the news.

Any discussion on extremism inevitably spirals down to looking at extremist profiles. There are a number of common preconceptions surrounding this. One of these is the idea that poverty leads to extremism. Marc Sageman in his study described how poverty was not a dominant feature of extremism but more vicarious poverty in which terrorists claim to fight for the poor and forgotten.¹⁰⁸ Sageman in his study described three waves of Jihadists. The first waves were the foreign Muslim fighters from Saudi Arabia and other countries that came to fight in the Afgan Jihad in the 80's. Many were highly educated and they later formed very close bonds that manifested in the terror networks of later years. The second wave in the 90's comprised of those from the middle class many of whom were college dropouts who were motivated by the plight of Muslims in lands where Jihad was called such as Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir, and the Philippines.

¹⁰⁷ "What made a model kid want to be a terrorist? : Questions remain about his ties to extremists", Straits Times article, November 30, 2010, pg A9.

¹⁰⁸ Marc Sageman, "The Jihadist's Profile," in *Leaderless jihad: terror networks in the twenty-first century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 48-49.

The first wave of Jihadists was their inspiration. This wave ended after the post 9/11 invasion of Afghanistan. The third wave of today is the post Iraq war generation.¹⁰⁹

SageMan then critiqued the myth of brainwashing or how someone adopts the ideology that the labeller actually rejects. He cited how the Saudi's associated their extremists to this category and blamed misguided religious brainwashing when in reality there is no credible scientific evidence for this concept.¹¹⁰

Another myth is that Muslim extremists come from religious backgrounds or are very religious from young. He explains how much of the third wave of Jihadists were self taught in religion. A vast majority grew up in a secular environment and was not educated in *Madrasahs*. Much of the third wave also did not come from families who were highly religious. But an exception were South East Asian Muslim extremists, namely from Indonesia and Malaysia, many of whom were religious as young people and were recruited from the best of students of the religious boarding schools (Pondok Ngruki and Lukmanul Hakiem) in which Abu Bakar Bashir and Abdullah Sungkar were headmasters.¹¹¹

SageMan also examined the case of the 13 year old *Laghriss* twins from Morocco who were arrested in 2003 for plotting to carry out suicide bombings in Rabat. Far from being passive victims of poverty, ignorance and brainwashing, they were active participants who even manipulated the men around them and envisioned themselves as heroines. They loved the attention they were getting and from being seen as serious

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 49-50.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 50-51.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 51-52.

adults. They also felt a moral outrage watching the plight of Muslims in Palestine. Sageman explained how this framing of moral outrage with one's own personal life experiences can prompt someone to take the path of extremism as it did with the Laghriss twins.¹¹²

Sageman also tackled the educational profile of terrorists and what can be cited as the ignorance theory by which lack of education contributes to one taking the extremist path. He describes how over 62% of those in the sample he analysed attended university and were well educated. In fact many came from the technical fields. (Engineers and physicians)¹¹³ This observation is important as it shows how the propensity for extremist thinking can stem from intuitive thinking based on culturally defined first principals. This is coupled with isolated deductive thinking that negates other perspectives, variables and context and leads to one making direct logical interpretations. Sageman explains how,

" Engineers, like mathematicians try to build from elementary building blocks. They go back to the "drawing board" and construct their arguments from the foundations. The structure of the argument is similar to the Salafis: "to build an ideal utopia, return to the purity of the first community, that of the prophet." For the Salafis, everything that comes after is corrupted and polluted by Greek philosophy, and therefore is no longer the word of God. This quest for original principals is similar in both Engineering and Salafism."

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¹¹² Ibid., 52-57.

¹¹³ Ibid., 58.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 59.

Sageman also addressed other explanations that ranged from explanations that attributed extremism to a lifestyle devoid of responsibility to sexual frustrations. All of which had little basis of support.¹¹⁵

Finally he examined pathological explanations that looked at ASPD (anti-social personality disorder). He found that terror groups did not want such members as they were not suitable for a culture that requires discipline and a sense of altruism which requires one to sacrifice for the greater good. These are qualities that someone with ASPD would not naturally have and interestingly are universal values that are accepted in any society.¹¹⁶ Terrorists he observed were not narcissistic but rather altruistic for positive reasons such as how their sacrifice will advance their cause. It was a culture that was reinforced by the fact that bonds of friendship and kinship strengthen the group and create recruitment from those in their social inner circle. This is a bond that is further strengthened by the hate they feel for their host country in which they apparently experience exclusion.¹¹⁷

There have been attempts to present an amalgamation of theoretical approaches to explain radicalisation. For instance, Staun adopts an approach of methodological individualism in which radicalisation of collective entities can only be explained by understanding how individual behaviour emerges as a process of socialization.¹¹⁸ His framework of aetiologies rests on causes and catalysts. It is a concentric approach that has ex-

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 60-62.

¹¹⁶ This concept of universal values is a theme that the findings reveal. See Chapter 6 under the theme of "*Appealing to Universal Values.*"

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 62-65.

¹¹⁸ Staun, 11

ternal factors (cultural, economic, political) on the outer rim, social processes that relate to the individual in the middle rim (social identification, network dynamics and relative deprivation) and in the innermost core rests individual factors such as personal experience, rationality and psychological profiles.¹¹⁹

Trigger factors such as trigger events and recruitment influences reside in the inner core but are not causes in themselves but influencing factors for individuals already in an advanced phase of radicalisation.¹²⁰ There is thus radicalisation prior, during and after recruitment. But for recruitment to occur that has to be prior radicalisation and it can only accelerate an already initiated process.¹²¹ Radicalisation is then a complex interconnection between factors at the external, social and individual level. Extent of the influence of these factors, how they relate to each other and how they combine to cause radicalisation is specific to the individual's circumstances.¹²²

Geoff Dean in his 'Multi-Context Model' describes three contextual factors that describe the process of joining and becoming an extremist. Namely the causal (*socio-cultural and geopolitical influence*), commitment (*individual motivations which may or may not be as a result of causal factors*) and capacity (*resulting from associations with radical groups*) contexts.¹²³ Dean explains how the initial stimulus is at the 'macro'

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 18

¹²⁰ Ibid., 20

¹²¹ Ibid., 15,25

¹²² Ibid., 11

¹²³ Geoffrey Dean and Petter Gottschalk, *Knowledge Management in Policing and Law Enforcement: Foundations, Structures and Applications*, (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007), 213-218

causal context which relates to the societal level. The stimulus is multi-factored and literature on terrorist indoctrination has narrowed it down to four major categories which are namely ‘perceived’ injustices, encultured violence, political / diplomatic failure and a culture that legitimizes violence.¹²⁴

This model and Staun’s framework show that ultimately there cannot be a singular reliance on one particular theoretical perspective as it can only cover one stage in the entire process of getting involved in activist or extremist groups. It takes a numbers of levels to transcend from the time an individual is placed in a situation where he becomes susceptible to extremist thought to becoming an actual participant in acts of violence. This is exemplified in the transformation of an individual from the role of a sympathiser, to distant activist / supporter, to full fledged participant to becoming a source of ideological dissemination. The various sociological theories relating to social movements might apply at different stages in this process. But as holistic as such approaches aim to be, they don’t adequately explain the appeal of extremist ideas to potential recruits as the persuasive strength and existence of rationally constructed arguments is not discussed adequately.

The study by Laila et al. also explains how the group structure of an extremist group had different roles and members with different character traits such as the entrepreneur, his protégé, misfits and drifters. Each ‘type’ of member had joined the group by different means and for different reasons. The entrepreneur and the protégé are usually religious idealists who have gone through an intellectual process and their main instiga-

¹²⁴ Ibid., 214

tors are political grievances and the need for social justice. The misfits are the ones with personal problems or join because of loyalty to the group members. The drifters are recruited unconsciously by social networks associated with the group. The “entrepreneur” is the one who in fact maintains the group by actively choosing his inner circle and is also the politically driven idealist. These varying extremist roles demonstrate how there are different paths to radicalisation unique to individuals and their experiences.¹²⁵

Likewise Ellis and Walsh cite D.Pearlman to describe three extremist personality types. The absolutist, narcissistic and intelligent charismatic leader, the anti social personality whose deficiencies are accepted and welcome into the group and the simple follower with a deep need for acceptance, a sense of absolutism and susceptibility to propaganda. The real motivation for joining may be in what joining such groups is able to provide for each of them given their differing individual motivations. Be it an avenue for advancement, opportunity for glamour and excitement, demonstration of courage and fame or the idea of fighting for a romanticised religious cause. But Ellis and Walsh admit that members of some groups defy all these intrinsic traits.¹²⁶ This might entail a whole set of other personal reasons specific to the individual. Thus overarching factors applicable at various stages in the radicalisation process eventually spread into a myriad number of individual contextualisations and motivations.

¹²⁵ Bokhari Laila et al, "PATHS TO GLOBAL JIHAD: RADICALISATION AND RECRUITMENT TO TERROR NETWORKS", *Proceedings from a FFI Seminar, Oslo*, www.investigativeproject.org/documents/testimony/41.pdf, (Accessed Mar 17, 2009), 11-12, 19

¹²⁶ Lee Ellis and Anthony Walsh, *Criminology: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc), 2006, 359

What exactly this process of radicalisation entails is described in Nielsen's report which lists out the stages leading onto terrorism based on the amalgamation of different author's views. This encompasses seeing all problems as injustices, moral justifications for violence, dehumanising and blaming victims of terror, displacing responsibility by citing divine sanctions or citing the more grievous harm that the state or the 'enemy' did instead.¹²⁷ Any of these can happen prior to recruitment. Moral disengagement explains why those with no pathological or criminal traits can contemplate such violence. This requires a process of transformation that removes feelings of guilt and moral dilemmas over the act which dehumanises the victim according to their indoctrination and belief in the justness of their cause. Thus allowing them to take on innocent victims as collateral damage. This involves a process of cognitive dissonance that allows attitudes to change instead of behaviour.¹²⁸ Cognitive dissonance is the discomfort of knowing that something is morally wrong but results in rewarding behaviour. It is the process where attitudes instead are changed to conform with and accept deviant behavior.¹²⁹

While this may relate more to terrorism, it would stand to reason that radicalisation which is the mental adaptation that is needed for terrorism would require similar attitudinal changes. It is thus possible that the move to action would possibly be de-

¹²⁷ Anja Dalgaard Nielsen, "Studying Violent Radicalisation in Europe I : the potential contribution of social movement theory", *DIIS (Danish Institute for International Studies) Working Paper ; 2008:02*, http://minibib.minibib.dk/F/T4EAX2U7LDLJUS3LN8EH9DTNAFUJJ8IFL4XVTXKCDQN64L3I9Q-16086?func=full-set-set&set_number=010692&set_entry=000002&format=999 (Accessed April 8, 2009), 10

¹²⁸ Ellis and Walsh, 361

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 130

pendent on the duration and intensity by which these attitudes become entrenched, opportunities made available and ability of the individual. This leads to the Resource Mobilization Theory which looks at how social movements actively create support and enlarge their network by rationally and opportunistically exploiting opening or closures in political space while pursuing action that will yield the greatest success.¹³⁰

But critics have cited how it is more than this and successful mobilization and movement maintenance is dependant upon the extent to which movements are able to articulate their cause in terms their targeted population can identify with. This is namely referring to the *interpretation* of grievances. Resource mobilization theory's concentration on social networks for recruitment requires interpersonal processes which would be depended on how recruiters are able to interpret and seek resonance with potential individual recruits.¹³¹

Thus the framing process is individualistic and it involves how the issue is communicated to the individual as opposed to a group. The issue in itself plays a lesser role. The framing process and its individual contextualisation are more important.¹³² The danger with this stance is that it marginalizes the important effect some issues have on their own. But this intrinsic analysis does not talk about the social forces that create processes like moral disengagement. For this, theories relating to social movements, relative deprivation, differential association and social control need to be looked at.

¹³⁰ Nielsen, 4-6

¹³¹ Snow, 1986, 466 in *Ibid.*, 5-6

¹³² Nielsen, 9

The social movement theory is essentially looking into why social mobilization develops, under what circumstances and its manifestations.¹³³ The social movement theory also looks into collective behavior as opposed to ideas that seek to identify the action of extremists as due to emotional reactions to very provocative stimuli or as a failure of societal integration. One theory that stems from this approach is relative deprivation (RD), as a result of comparative inequality or expectations not met. A feeling of being wronged or seeing injustice in certain situations can also relate to a state of RD.¹³⁴ In a social movement, besides material resources other resources such as religious ideologies need mobilization to create a movement, support a cause and provide recruitment / tactical strategies.¹³⁵

Smelser in his account of six factors that encourage social movement development based on the structural-strain theory states that for a social movement to propagate you need structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and dissemination of a belief / solution, precipitating factors, mobilization and finally breakdown or absence of social control.¹³⁶ To illustrate this, imagine a Muslim society that is sympathetic to collective action towards redressing accepted grievances. The strain comes from Muslims who experience deprivation in whatever form. Then a solution to the problem of Muslims is proposed by the social movement through differential association and propagated through the framing process. Social movements 'frame' their

¹³³ Colin J. Beck, "The Contribution of Social Movement Theory to Understanding Terrorism", *Sociology Compass* 2.5 (2008), <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/121382981/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0> (Accessed Oct 24, 2008), 1565 - 1581.

¹³⁴ Robert Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie", *American Sociological Review* 3.5, 1938, 672-82.

¹³⁵ John Mccarthy and Mayer Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory", *The American Journal of Sociology* 82.6, 1977, 1212-1241.

¹³⁶ Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior*, (New York City: Free Press), 1962, 15-18.

cause so as to seek sympathy and identification with whomever they target as their audience. (e.g. media and new recruits)¹³⁷ This is followed by precipitating factors where the discontent propagated through the framing process receives a catalyst in the form of a specific trigger event that gives credence to their claims. This culminates into a final stage where the ideas of the movement are mobilised into action, which may involve violence. Strict social controls can either contribute or prevent this (albeit temporarily). State social control systems and state responses to the conflict can have an overarching influence above all the other factors mentioned by mitigating or worsening the situation.

Gurney and Tierney cite that the problem with the (RD) approach is that the nature of the relationship between the objective conditions that create this feeling and how such perceptions are formed are not covered. The coping mechanism and varied responses for such frustrations are also not explored. For instance an individual can respond to his RD in other ways besides joining a social movement.¹³⁸

Furthermore, behaviour may not correspond directly with attitudes arising from RD. The idea that everyone in a social movement or group is homogeneous in belief and motivation or uniform in their action is another fallacy. Gurney and Tierney quote how recent work on social movement participation has moved away from this notion by looking at differential paths to joining such a movement¹³⁹ or significance of

¹³⁷ Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment", *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000), 611-639.

¹³⁸ Joan Neff Gurney and Kathlenn J. Tierney, "Relative Deprivation and Social Movements: A Critical Look at Twenty Years of Theory and Research", *The Sociological Quarterly* 23.1 (1982), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4106351> (Accessed Mar 17, 2009), 36.

¹³⁹ Orum 1974 in Ibid 37.

interpersonal ties and organizational factors¹⁴⁰ in getting individuals into such movements.¹⁴¹ Another point is the direction of causality. Do people with RD gravitate to such movements or such movements create perception of RD in individuals to get recruitment? Structural inequalities may be present before feelings of RD and such perceptions may only be created after the movement propagates its world view. Quite simply it is not clear if RD is a cause or the result of collective action.¹⁴²

Passy and Giugni in their study have examined social networks and individual perceptions with a view to explain differential participation in such movements. Intensity of participation they say rests on factors like the embeddedness of the social network and one's perception of participation. The perceived importance of one's contribution and effectiveness of their participation is an important determinant. Networks on their part play the role of structurally creating opportunities to participate while socializing them to protest issues and subsequent decisions on their level and type of involvement. They cite several studies that summararily factor individual participation on the risks of collective action, the behavior towards authorities (i.e. if the individual gives low legitimacy to the political authority and conversely gives higher legitimacy to the activist group), and personal availability to participate in such activities.¹⁴³ They cite an expansion of the rational choice theory that takes into account social and moral incentives as there may not be material benefits for engaging in such activities.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Wilson and Orum 1974 in *Ibid* 37.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 37

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 38-39

¹⁴³ Florence Passy and Marco Giugni, "Social Networks and Individual Perceptions: Explaining Differential Participation in Social Movements", *Sociological Forum* 16.1 (2001), <http://www.jstor.org/pss/685032> (Accessed Mar 17, 2009), 123-127

¹⁴⁴ Fieman and Gamson, 1979, Pizzorno, 1978 in *Ibid.*, 127

They also conversely look at the role of social networks in creating recruitment. Increased levels of participation is attributed to strong formal and informal ties, the status of the recruiters (how credible, convincing and involved they are) and if these social networks have similar cultural or ideological frames¹⁴⁵ to the movement.¹⁴⁶ They also describe how the group in turn is able to alter perceptions of effectiveness of their actions, legitimacy of the authority and even notions of how available the person is. Thus connecting structure and agency to show how rational choice can be altered.¹⁴⁷

Sutherland's differential association theory is looking at how deviant behaviour is learnt through creating differential conceptions of reality and forming associated realities.¹⁴⁸ Its central tenet rests with learning the behavior through close relations with groups. Deviance arises when definitions (worldviews / attitudes) favour rule violation. A normative conflict usually leads to this and the individual gravitates to others holding such definitions. These definitions are created by the individual by molding them according to the person being emulated. Definitions become more entrenched depending on the frequency, priority, duration and intensity of association.¹⁴⁹ Having said this; it can be seen how the radicalization process takes time to internalize but speeds up if these

¹⁴⁵ E.g. solidarity movements and religious organisations can have similar ideological frames that emphasise altruistic values and helping the underprivileged. Thus if an individual is in a formal network like a religious organisation he can also find resonance with solidarity movements having been ingrained in similar values and therefore more likely to have increased participation in solidarity movements which emphasise similar themes, *see* *Ibid.*, 130

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 125-130

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 130

¹⁴⁸ Ellis & Walsh 2006, 114

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 115-117

factors gather momentum.

These definitions are learnt and relate to Aker's social learning theory and the idea of positive and negative reinforcement which subsequently entrench the behavior according to the social context the individual is placed in.¹⁵⁰ The flip side of this will be social control theories which relate to mechanisms put in place to reduce non-conformity and deviance. Besides coercive social controls, the ones that work best are the ones society internalizes as being correct.¹⁵¹ Herschi's social bonding theory talks about the emotional aspects of conformity which is dependent on who the *significant other* is and what this person means to the individual. Low commitment to a conforming lifestyle, along with non-involvement in conforming activities, beliefs and societal structures that function as social controls, leads to deviance (in this case joining extremist groups). Strain facilitates this by weakening social bonds of control.¹⁵²

Differential association might require 'framing' the cause of radical groups for transmission. Social control on the other hand might require 'framing' mainstream ideals that lead to conformity. Either side has to include the cause of battling injustice into their ethos to mobilise individuals. This 'injustice frame'¹⁵³ is a collection of ideas and symbols that illustrate the significance of the problem and what the movement is doing

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 116-117

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 118

¹⁵² Ibid., 123

¹⁵³ Charlotte Ryan and William W. Gamson, "The Art of Reframing Political Debates", *Contexts* - by the American Sociological Association 5.1, 2006, <http://www.mrap.info/docs/Ryan%20and%20Gamson%20-%20Art%20of%20Reframing%20Political%20Debate.pdf>, (Accessed Oct 24, 2008), 13-18.

to combat it. Ryan and Gamson explain that facts develop meaning when presented in a frame. Individuals carry multiple reference frames in their minds and thus success in indoctrination or reframing involves even changing the worldviews of their adversaries. A fundamental feature of all these frames according to them is that they contain implicit or explicit appeals to moral principles.¹⁵⁴ Stemming from this, it is possible that issues affecting Muslims at a personal level can lead to injustice frames to be subtly self formulated by the individual. This may be done by their own interpretation of personal experiences and exposure to the media and world events even before contact with activist groups or messages. To see where such framing might occur requires looking at the process of radicalisation itself.

The NYPD report came up with four phases of radicalisation which exemplify the theories mentioned and highlight the approach taken by mainstream scholars and researchers. The four stages involved are summarized as follows:¹⁵⁵

a) Pre-Radicalization – This looks at their life situation before adopting what was deemed in the report as the ideology of “Jihadi-Salafi Islam.” It could be a situation of low social controls and feelings of relative deprivation brought about either structurally or through personal experiences.

b) Self - identification – Where these individuals influenced by the overarching ideology

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, "Radicalisation in the West: The Homegrown Threat." *NYPD Intelligence Division*, www.nypdshield.org/public/SiteFiles/documents/NYPD_Report-Radicalisation_in_the_West.pdf, (Accessed Mar 17, 2009), 6-10

of “Jihadi-Salafi Islam,” move away from their old identity and gravitate towards like minded individuals.¹⁵⁶ The catalyst is usually a crisis or life changing event that shakes previously held beliefs and makes the individual open and receptive to new worldviews. Such catalysts might be economic, social, political or personal in nature.

c) Indoctrination – The stage where beliefs are intensified and reinforced usually through differential association with like minded people.¹⁵⁷ The charismatic authority figure such as a “spiritual sanctioner” usually drives this stage.

d) Jihadization – Planning, preparation and execution of terrorist attacks. A key component of this stage is the role of the “operational leader” who controls and keeps the group focused while keeping motivation high.

The problem with the report is its sweeping generalizations on Muslims and labelling of all activities associated with increase in religiosity, points where Muslims congregate, criticism or activism against American policies as being precursors to radicalisation.¹⁵⁸

Wiktorowicz describes the initial interest in these movements as a result of ‘cognitive openings’ which is essentially the self identification stage described in the

¹⁵⁶ We can see how differential association and framing comes in at this stage.

¹⁵⁷ Framing is again applied here.

¹⁵⁸ Rana Ghayyoor, "US police report blasted for marginalising Muslims", *The Muslim*, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1886322/posts>, (Accessed Mar 20, 2009).

NYPD report. He recognizes that cognitive openings by themselves are not enough but the seeker here reaches out to such movements through social networks and personal relationships. This includes both prior and newly constructed ones¹⁵⁹ which differential association theories cover.

Then he questions how these movements and the ideology they espouse gain credibility and the impression that the Islam they purport is the authentic version.¹⁶⁰ This may have more to do with initial exposure, availability, strong visibility and more importantly credibility of alternate discourse. If mainstream religious answers are found lacking, this facilitates the ‘seeker’ to alternatives.¹⁶¹

Lastly he questions the progression to ‘risky activism’ which extends to militancy and violence. He attributes this to socialization. He adds that a divine ideology is ultimately self serving as the personal goal of salvation normalizes whatever extremes the religious ideology offers. Thus violence as a necessary condition to fulfill divine will is perfectly acceptable and internalized through the movement’s ideology that represents divine truth to the individual.¹⁶² This again relates to the last three stages in the NYPD report.

He takes this further by presenting how rationality can apply to such radicalism.

¹⁵⁹ Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam rising: Muslim extremism in the West*, (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield), 2005, 5.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 6

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 21

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 6

The commonly held view he says is that structural strain (e.g. poor economic mobility) coupled with arising individual pathologies (e.g. anomie and alienation) causes collective action through such ‘irrational’ behaviour.¹⁶³ He briefly touches on ideas of failed secular modernization programs, the post colonial legacy and the political repression that followed as contributing to this strain.¹⁶⁴

But he later critiques this general stance by quoting Leon Trotsky’s who said “*The mere existence of privations is not enough to cause an insurrection, if it were, the masses would be always in revolt.*” This supports ideas of social control in which societal control measures such as those employed by the state can limit deviance to some extent. He cites how economically underdeveloped but authoritarian countries like Syria and Iraq (before the invasion) had low levels of recruitment into Islamic movements.¹⁶⁵

He also asks why some choose activism while others take a more militant path. He attributes this to a cost benefit calculation or rationality that formulates in an individual’s mind. Likewise suicide bombings become rational action when viewed as a form of tactic in asymmetrical warfare. Solidarity among the group motivates individuals to view sacrifices as symbols of commitment. The idea of a ‘*living martyr*’ makes leaving very difficult because of the glorification and acceptance one receives while alive.¹⁶⁶ All this points to rational calculations endemic to the situation one is in. Wiktorowicz surmises that rational choice models operate on a principle of *self*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 11

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 14

interest.¹⁶⁷ Be it for salvation, altruism, seeking glory or for a sense of worth and purpose.

The recruitment dynamics for suicide volunteers support this idea of self-interest. Suicide volunteers are usually in a state of personal crisis and the group fosters the views that martyrdom is the solution to their personal crisis.¹⁶⁸ Suicide terrorist recruitment seems to follow the cliché of originating predominantly in areas of economic deprivations. But this requires prolonged violent conflict with no foreseeable political future coupled with a sympathetic societal culture that sees itself as oppressed and weak.¹⁶⁹ Although, in the West, active recruitment of lonely rootless young men who seek group familiarity in areas of congregation¹⁷⁰ points more to alienation rather than outright deprivation as a catalyst.

While ideologies have been predominantly cited as the overarching reason for radicalisation, it is important to understand exactly what role they play. The dynamics behind the effect of ideologies are very intrinsic. They are sometimes as a result of a personal trauma or situation. But in many cases, they turn this initial low state around by creating an exaggerated sense of importance in which they might feel they are part of an enlightened elite. This results in an elitist *esprit de corps*. Reverse racism here provides

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 28

¹⁶⁸ J.P. Larsson, "The Role of Religious Ideology in Modern Terrorist Recruitment" in *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes, Volume 1: Recruitment*, Wesport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006, 154.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 161-162

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 155

a pathway to power.¹⁷¹

This percolates down to the role played by radical religious ideologies.¹⁷² The seekers here are looking for answers in order to make sense of the world.¹⁷³ Religious ideologies give the recruit a place in a system that marginalizes. Larsson cites how all religions are theologically supremacist.¹⁷⁴ The idea that God is on their side affirms one's place in the group and helps eliminate any doubt the recruit may have. Especially if it is a quick fix way to salvation and purifications of their sins for a lifetime of moral dilemmas and baggage. Research has shown how suicide terrorists can swing between two extremes of indulging in vice to fundamentalist religious behaviour. This has been said to give credence to the idea of terrorism being a phenomenon onto itself where recruits that gravitate to it have other issues besides just belief in the cause. The cause simply provides an outlet for issues which are purely personal to the individual.¹⁷⁵

Religious traditions are said to be traditionally absolutist, with a crusade mentality and sense of purpose that usually centers on eschatological beliefs in the idea of a final battle between the good believers and evil unbelievers. Theological justifications of violence furthermore emphasize the insignificance of ordinary life as compared to the ultimate purpose. Responsibility is thus removed which make the individual more willing to undertake violence that one would not have contemplated

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 195

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 198

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 199

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 202

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 209

previously.¹⁷⁶ Individually focused ideologies offer something missing from the lives of individuals. Be it higher calling or an alternative to secular material life.¹⁷⁷ Socially focused ideologies behind religion offer explanations for individual victimization in terms of historical persecution of the faith.¹⁷⁸

An extension of how religious ideologies have played a considerable role in extremist motivations can be seen in millennial prophetic myths and in the realm of revolutionary eschatology. Norman Cohn who examined Christian and Judaic prophecies in Europe during the 11th to 16th century, described five elements characterising how millenarian sects and movements viewed salvation through a prophecy. The prophecy had to be *collective* such that the rewards are enjoyed by the chosen many. It would be *terrestrial* and thus realized in this world. It will be seen as an event that is *imminent*. The change that will come about will be *total* and will completely change life in this world. Finally, the change will be *miraculous* and will have therefore have supernatural or devine intervention.¹⁷⁹ Cohn also described the societal conditions that would promote revolutionary Millenarianism. Oppression, hardship or some form of cataclysm sets the stage. This is compounded when there is an unorganised, atomised population, rural or urban who are not just poor but feel they have no recognised place in society. This group will also feel they lack material and emotional support from traditional social groups which have disintegrated or are not effectively organised. They are thus alienated

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 203-205

¹⁷⁷ Ibid .,206

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 211

¹⁷⁹ Norman Cohn, *The pursuit of the millennium: revolutionary millenarians and mystical anarchists of the Middle Ages*. Rev. and exp. ed. New York: Barnes & Noble, 2009, xiii-xiv.

from traditional social groups or politically marginal. They will have no regular, institutionalised methods for voicing their grievances or pressing their claims. At times they could be in the in midst of a wider revolution, propelled by a charismatic authority figure that sets the idea behind waiting for the *propheta*. The group led by the authority figure will reinforce the importance of mission and they will come to feel that they are more fortunate or superior to the rest of humanity that is not chosen or did not choose this path.¹⁸⁰

Cohn then translates this to contemporary left-wing revolutions and movements and how those who subscribe to these ideas can also come from “*certain politically marginal elements in technologically advanced societies – chiefly young or unemployed workers and a small minority of intellectuals and students.*”¹⁸¹ This is fact correlates with what Merton describes when he states that those who spearhead this revolution will usually come from a rising class rather than the most depressed strata of the population.¹⁸² The findings chapter in this thesis will later demonstrate how revolutionary eschatological myths operate in the context of Muslim extremist narratives. Ultimately it will illustrate how the millennial ‘*mythos*’ in extremist Muslim narratives is translated into a ‘*logos*’ that makes sense to the individual and provides recommended actions that provide instrumental gains culminating towards this prophetic vision.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Cohn, *The pursuit of the millennium*, 304-309.

¹⁸¹ Cohn, *The pursuit of the millennium*, 309.

¹⁸² Robert King Merton, *Social theory & social structure*, Rev. & enl. ed. Illinois: Free Pr. of Glencoe, 1962,146.

¹⁸³ See themes of “The Culture, mysticism and miracles of Jihad” and “Prophecy” in the findings under the Resonance Cluster in Chapter 7 of thesis.

Studies on radicalisation have placed considerable weight on religious ideologies as prime motivators. For instance Cozzens while recognizing the influence of other factors like social processes and other grievances cites that “*ideologies represent the fulcrum of their (Salafi Jihadis) campaigns.*”¹⁸⁴ He also cites Wiktorowicz to say, “*If beliefs do indeed matter, then policy needs to focus on [jihadis’] ideological and cultural structures...*”¹⁸⁵ In sum advocating combating radicalisation squarely with combating its ideology.

The problem with this approach is that ideologies are only as effective as to the extent of the resonance it creates within the individual’s personal life and experiences. This goes beyond the ideologically framed sales pitch into how the ideology is interpreted in relation to one’s life. This is what individual and socially focused ideologies do at the grassroots level especially when they are rationally constructed arguments that resonate with real issues and circumstances.

Wiktorowicz cites the importance of looking beyond Islam and instead at the extremist group that operates according to the common dynamics in social movements. Citing Mancur Olsen, he describes how certain benefits (selective incentives) accrue to

¹⁸⁴ Jeffrey B. Cozzens, "Identifying entry points of action in counter radicalisation : countering Salafi-Jihadi ideology through development initiatives--strategic openings", *DIIS (Danish Institute for International Studies) Working Paper ; 2006:06*, http://minibib.minibib.dk/F/T4EAX2U7LDLJUS3LN8EH9DTNAFUJJ8IFL4XVTXKCDQN64L3I9Q-17064?func=find-b&REQUEST=Identifying+entry+points+of+action&find_code=WRD&ADJACENT=N, (Accessed Apr 8, 2009), 1 & 4.

¹⁸⁵ Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Suicide Bombings: Do Beliefs Matter?” (September 2004) at: http://www.unc.edu/~kurzman/Soc3264/Wiktorowicz_EXPLAINING_SUICIDE_BOMBINGS.doc in Ibid., 3.

only those who join. These go beyond material incentives to motivations such as a sense of belonging, trust, personal relationships and solidarity which become paramount matters.¹⁸⁶ This again makes leaving very difficult as it is not just a matter of not believing in the ideology anymore but it also means breaking ‘family’ ties. Atran in his study of the Taliban showed how extremist ties are at times more cultural and familial than political or ideological.¹⁸⁷

At this point, the argument may allude to the idea of the activist or extremist as a rational actor who given the conditions, chooses a course of action which is rationalised to provide more gains.¹⁸⁸ But this Münch says negates power relationships in which the actor has no choice. It also negates the effect of trust formation with the group built on feelings of familiarity and on an emotive non-rational basis. Finally it overlooks norms established through social ties and more importantly the construction of cultural meaning-relationships.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore Sciulli cites how subjective preferences have been negated to the point that any action can be deemed rational.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, the idea of the Muslim activist or extremist acting according to a cost benefit equation and internalizing a rationality unique to oneself does not factor the subjectivity of this rationality. Being

¹⁸⁶ Wiktorowicz 2005, 15

¹⁸⁷ Scott Atran, "A Question of Honour: Why the Taliban Fight and What to Do About It.", *Asian Journal of Social Science* 38 (2010), 358

¹⁸⁸ Richard Münch, "Rational Choice Theory: A critical Assessment of its Explanatory Power" in Coleman, James Samuel, and Thomas J. Farraro, *Rational Choice Theory: Advocacy and Critique (Key Issues in Sociological Theory)*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc, 1992, 138.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 139-157

¹⁹⁰ David Sciulli, "Weakness in Rational Choice Theory's Contribution to Comparative Research" in Coleman, James Samuel, and Thomas J. Farraro, *Rational Choice Theory: Advocacy and Critique (Key Issues in Sociological Theory)*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc, 1992, 166.

subjective, it may relate more towards socially created feelings based on emotion, trust and the meanings derived through social relationships. But this approach does not factor the other possibility that there can be instances where a coherently presented rational argument or decision outweighs the effect of any subjective aspects brought upon by one's social conditions.

For instance, Hafez in his study of suicide bombings cited how rationalising this violent act is done by justifying the victim as tyrants, apostates, heretics and infidels, by emphasising the justifiable intention behind the act in terms of sacrifice for a greater good and using historical Islamic religious rulings that excuse collateral damage when civilians are killed in a night raid and if Muslim civilians are used as human shields.¹⁹¹ Tosini in particular cited suicide bombers as being driven by an axiological rationality in which they are motivated by commitment to altruistic goals, end states and moral values similar to what Durkhiem espoused in describing altruistic suicide. In a sense, axiological rationality is alluding to a specific kind of rationality for an extremist that transcends instrumental logic.¹⁹² In the case of female suicide bombers Mia Bloom described how such women are dictated sometimes by a patriarchal morality and conception of motherhood which involves self-denial and self-effacement.¹⁹³

Christine Fair describes how militant groups have a selection bias to get the most qualified individuals. This is determined by the 'recruiter' through personal interactions

¹⁹¹ Mohammed M. Hafez, "The Alchemy of Martyrdom: Jihadi Salafism and Debates over Suicide Bombings in the Muslim World", *Asian Journal of Social Science* 38 (2010), 366

¹⁹² D.Tosini, "Calculated, Passionate, Pious Extremism: Beyond a Rational Choice Theory of Suicide Terrorism.", *Asian Journal of Social Science* 38 (2010), 396, 402

¹⁹³ Mia Bloom, "Female suicide bombers: a global trend.", *International Center for the Study of Terrorism*. www.icst.psu.edu/publications/bloom.female-suicide-bombers.6JUL09.pdf (accessed June 5, 2012).

with the potential member to size him up.¹⁹⁴ Likewise Berman and Laitin in describing the ‘club goods’ model relate how rational choice modelling helps explain in part the local popularity of groups like Hamas, Taliban and Hezbollah because they provide effective local public goods (e.g. welfare) which the government does not or is unable to provide or is providing ineffectively.¹⁹⁵ But this undermines factors such as social ties, personal frame alignments and extremism in countries that offer effective public goods. This requires looking at motivations based on other specific incentives and persuasive effects.

Societal presence has been described as another factor of attraction.¹⁹⁶ This relates to movements that have the loudest, most visible, accessible and seemingly effective voice. Such movements create this impression by appealing to a sense of urgency and crisis in the Muslim world.¹⁹⁷ What is key to all these theories of joining is summed in Wiktorowicz’s explanation on how “*Incentives, networks and frames are all part of the more general process of persuasion.*”¹⁹⁸ This can differ from movement to movement. Thus different movements might offer other localized ‘incentives’ for joining. This supports the idea of ‘bottom up’ ideological transmission in which the individual at the grassroots levels is best placed to bring in individuals who have similar

¹⁹⁴ C. Christine Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: A New Look at the Militancy-Madrasah Connection", *Asia Policy*, number 4 (July 2007), http://nbr.org/publications/asia_policy/AP4/AP4%20Fair.pdf, (Accessed Mar 17, 2009), 117-118.

¹⁹⁵ Berman, Eli, and David D. Laitin. "RELIGION, TERRORISM AND PUBLIC GOODS: TESTING 'The Club Model'", *NBER Working Paper Series.*, www.economics.uci.edu/docs/recruitment/w08/berman.pdf (Accessed Mar 17, 2009), 4

¹⁹⁶ Wiktorowicz 2005, 23

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 24

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17

localized frames of reference. It also suggests that the process of indoctrination has spatial variations according to localities. Akin to how Ayoob cites the importance of domestic concerns over external variables in the form of activism or extremism the movement takes.¹⁹⁹

Who presents the movement and its ideals and how it is presented is equally as important. Wiktorowicz explains that established and trusted social ties are trusted pathways of information which the newcomer is more likely to believe.²⁰⁰ It is not just about *who* the influential figure is but more about *what* this person does. Using the example of Omar Bakri, Wiktorowicz describes how this charismatic authority figure besides being 'likeable', is also willing to interact and debate.²⁰¹ Critical discourse creates in the mind of the individual that if it can be talked about and debated over, then the figure that is more than willing to do this is credible. One might feel that this individual's view must therefore be true as it can stand up to criticism and scrutiny.²⁰²

Thus it might seem that cult dynamics involving a charismatic leader may equally apply to Islamist activists and militant groups. This includes controlling perceptions and behavior, denying and altering perceptions of reality to maintain social cohesion, using the transformative experience of group membership, close monitoring, boundary control to make leaving difficult and finally ensuring members remain

¹⁹⁹ Ayoob 2007, 169

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 22

²⁰¹ Wiktorowicz 2005: p26

²⁰² Experience of Ed Husain in Joining the Hizb Ut Tahrir in UK see Ed Husain, *The Islamist*, 2007, 32-33.

committed.²⁰³

The MI5 briefing note on Understanding Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in the UK which was based on numerous case studies done, explains how even in self radicalisation cases, it is the opening of opportunities for virtual social interaction over the internet and not just by passive browsing or simply reading ideological literature that contributes to recruitment. Any new media appeals more to the *emotional content* of such media rather than the actual content.²⁰⁴ This stresses the primacy of conveying emotive responses through social interaction while undermining the role of ideology or any rational aspects of the narrative.

Percht in his report to the Danish Ministry of Justice agrees with the NYPD report that isolated ethnic enclaves create anti integration radicalism. Briefly citing how Islamaphobia in the West has caused some of this by steering individuals towards acceptance in these enclaves. The important factor that stands out in the report is the relative lack of Muslim public debate and discourse in Europe. They relate this to the relative silence of the moderate voice.²⁰⁵ But alternatively, if there are not enough

²⁰³ Marc Galanter and Forest, James J.F., "*Cults, Charismatic Groups and Social Systems: Understanding the Transformation of Terrorist Recruits*" in *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes, Volume 2: Training*, Wesport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006.,56-60, 66-69.

²⁰⁴ Alan Travis, "The making of an extremist", *MI5 briefing note, Understanding Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in the UK*, www2.gsu.edu/~crirxf/MI5-B.pdf (Accessed Mar 17, 2009).

²⁰⁵ Tomas Precht, "Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Europe: From Conversion to Terrorism", *Research report funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice*, www.justitsministeriet.dk/fileadmin/downloads/Forskning_og_dokumentation/Home_grown_terrorism_and_Islamist_radicalisation_in_Europe_-_an_assessment_of_influencing_factors__2_.pdf (Accessed Mar 17, 2009), 42-49.

platforms for all Muslim voices in this discourse, actual grievances may be simply relegated to the ramblings of activists.

An important perspective he touched on was the desire for activism. Which relates to the need to *'do something'* and the search for direct and simple solutions for the issues they face or is important to them. In quoting Sageman, he explains how such individuals sometimes are *"enthusiastic volunteers, trying to impress their friends with their heroism and sacrifice. Suicide bombers...have become the rock stars of young Muslim militants."* This alludes to the idea that Islamists activists and extremist groups provide the counter-culture for some young Muslims.²⁰⁶

The ICSR report by King's College London, cites the importance of activists as recruitment magnets for seekers and other self starter groups as they provide openings in an activity where open recruitment is not possible. The internet naturally plays a prominent role in this. Therefore such gateway organizations do not need to exist physically but the importance of the grassroots level activist is paramount for recruitment. In quoting Sageman, they cite how recruitment is more of a bottom up activity rather than top down where Muslims are able actively seek out opportunities for joining rather than being manipulated into recruitment. They explain how the process of recruitment extends beyond this. Radicalisation is an on going process upon recruitment which changes or entrenches the recourse to violence.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 52

²⁰⁷ Peter R. Neumann and Brooke Rogers. "Recruitment and Mobilisation for the Islamist Militant Movement in Europe", *A study carried out by Kings College London for the European Commission (Directorate*

In describing the recruitment process, they give importance to four factors in the persuasion process, namely identity, social forces (group dynamics), politics and religion. In citing Wiktorowicz they explain how the cognitive opening is not always political but can also be cultural, economic or purely personal. Such groups essentially manipulate such triggers.²⁰⁸ An important contributing factor as a result of this is ‘*reverse loathing*’ where the racism one experienced is reversed onto the offending group to the point that they become racist or supremacists themselves. This is coupled with the creation of empowering identities which allow the individual to reconstruct one’s prior lowly identity and to rebuild their confidence.²⁰⁹

Another factor mentioned in the report is the disconnect between traditional practices of immigrant Muslims to Europe and that of second or third generation Muslims. The traditional Islam of their parents is perceived by the newer generation to be too narrow, rituals based and apolitical. But the Islamic religious identity at the same time creates opportunities for opposition to Western culture and politics.²¹⁰ The report also cites Farhad Khosrokhavar’s idea of ‘*humiliation by proxy*’ in which Muslims in the West identify with the humiliation and suffering of Muslims anywhere else in the world. This explains how the local Muslim issues anywhere else can get connected to other

General Justice, Freedom and Security).carried out by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR) at Kings College London, icsr.info/publications/papers/1234516791ICSREURsearchReport_Proof1.pdf (Accessed Mar 17, 2009), 5-9

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 39

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 40

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 41

local or global issues and used as a tool for recruitment.²¹¹ Even though this report relates to Muslim migrants to Europe, it may be equally applicable to any country where Muslims reside as this relates to generational rifts and how political activism is targeted at the young by extremists groups.²¹²

The study by Laila et al cites the recruitment technique used by *Al-Muhajirun*. This involves approaching religious seekers, starting discussions on Islam with them and focusing on the concerns of the recruit so as not to frighten him away. They also always encourage them to attend meetings and discussions. Extremist militant groups on the other hand have to be careful of who comes in due to concern for security. They usually tend to take in trusted members on basis of kinship and established and proven ties. Despite this difference, the pattern of reaching out is relatively the same.²¹³

In explaining the group dynamics of recruitment, the ICSR report refers to Henry Tajfel and John Turner's Social Identity theory in which the individual defines himself in terms of the group. Thus a threat to the group is a threat to the individual. They cite how such groups create openings for individuals seeking welfare or self-esteem. Such seekers enjoy having people that will listen and make them feel important. It becomes a place where they feel their thoughts have influence and feelings matter. Once this feeling of acceptance comes in, it is very hard for them to consider a world without it. The perception of danger against the external threat also holds the groups together and leads to what Irving Janis referred to as 'group think' where there is fear of not conforming or

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² See findings in page 257, 262 & 361

²¹³ Laila et al. 1996, 10-11

holding the view of the group.²¹⁴ The social isolation created is a major contributing factor as the only world real to them is that of the group.²¹⁵

Gerwehr and Daly in their report to RAND regarding Al Qaeda recruitment shed light on what exactly is in the frame alignment. As a general guide to the psychographic pitch used, if the member is from a privileged class it is put in patriotic or religious terms. If the family is a struggling immigrant family, it is framed as a means of self advancement. If the family structure is disapproving or traditional, it is framed as a revolutionary act of self-discovery.²¹⁶

Finally, there is a need to look at how analysing an extremist narrative on the basis of the logical structure hypothesis relates to the other arguments and approaches presented earlier. The logical structure hypothesis focuses on the sociology of communications. While the messaging can be individualistic if seen from the perspective of the reader, a comprehensive profile of the individual's cultural nuances, social networks, upbringing, moral persuasions and broader social-political milieu sets the context within which the logical structure hypothesis operates. How much the *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* of an extremist argument is constrained by these social psychological parameters is contingent on the persuasive nature of counter narratives as well. These socially constructed counter narratives are similar to what Merton described as the

²¹⁴ *Ibid* ., 44

²¹⁵ *Ibid* ., 45

²¹⁶ Scott Gerwehr and Sara Daly, "Al-Qaida: Terrorist Selection and Recruitment", *RAND National Security Research Division*, www.rand.org/pubs/reprints/2006/RAND_RP1214.pdf (Accessed Mar 17, 2009), 74-75.

*'Conservative myth of society'*²¹⁷ where an individual accepts disadvantage as normal societal fact or due to individual meritocracy. This can extend to social grievances on points of outrage or issues of injustice. When any societal coping mechanisms fails, it can lead to the 'renegade' as described by Merton to relate and locate the source of one's frustrations to the dominant social structure. The renegade then renounces prevailing values and works towards a more suitable alternate structure that removes these discrepancies. The renegade thus puts the dominant values and ideals of mainstream society into question and signifies break of unity in the group.²¹⁸ What the logical structure hypothesis is suggesting is that rationally constructed narratives leverage on these inherent and very real structural conditions by rebelling against mainstream explanations aimed at creating acceptance or an acceptable rationale to explain away any valid social discrepancies and points of outrage.

Mamdani explains the context behind these points of outrage and how it is predicated on a lot of 'culture talk' which overlooks how the cold war actually set the stage for these conditions. By "Culture talk" he is referring to Edward Said's assertion that orientalist thinking sees rationality as residing in the West. The East is seen as emotive and religiously doctrinal. This has been reinforced by political projects that need to rely on an explanation of Islam as a culturally different, rigid and incompatible civilisation. Such ideas as developed by Bernard Lewis and later reinforced by Samuel Huntington have given rise to the idea of 'good' Muslims as modern, secular and

²¹⁷ Merton, *Social theory & social structure*, 144-146.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

Westernised and ‘bad’ Muslims as doctrinal, anti-modern and virulent.²¹⁹ Stemming from proliferation of this theoretical premise, Muslim extremist narratives cannot be seen as being rationally / logically constructed or argued.

Khaled M. Abou El Fadl challenges this notion by attributing the rise of Muslim radicals to the degradation of classical Islamic scholarship and authority. He felt that the Islamic *Ulema* have historically been progressive. Colonialism and post war authoritarian rulers brought about its steady decline in quality and influence. Islam he felt when hijacked by technocrats who were not really well schooled in Islamic jurisprudence.²²⁰ He states how most of Islamic law is in fact the product of juristic reasoning and interpretative activity.²²¹ Thus when extremist narratives go into debates about their actions based on scripture, it is often on the basis of logical reasoning and interpretation of religious scriptures.

Mamdani also cited the difference between reformists and radicals. As such there is a need to recognise the gradations in political movements that culminate towards changing the state as the final solution to all other issues. Both reformists and radicals speak the same language of Islam but advocate different means of getting to where they want.²²² Early Islamic reformers such as Al-Afgani felt that the key challenge facing contemporary Muslims was colonialism. He felt there was a contradiction in how

²¹⁹ Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the roots of terror* (New York: Three Leaves Press, 2004), 20-24, 32

²²⁰ Khaled M. Abou El Fadl, *The great theft: wresting Islam from the extremists*. New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005, 26-46.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

²²² Mamdani, *Good Muslim, bad Muslim*, 46

Western ideals that supposedly stood for modernity also entailed colonialism which stifled the free reign for human creativity and originality and hence modernisation.²²³ Mamdani locates the source of Muslim grievances today as being historically engendered by US and Western political projects. This is namely stemming from an imperial search for effective ways of undermining the political support of leftist nationalist governments or those deemed the ‘enemy’. The US and the West by this strategy supported authoritarian dictatorships or regimes that were repressive. Nationalist movements that opposed such regimes via a leftist track were targeted by covert / proxy wars in which the West sided with the pro-West but repressive regimes.²²⁴ Mamdani states that the terror the West faces today “*could not have flourished except in a global environment where at least one ‘superpower’ turned a blind eye to its ‘terror.’*”²²⁵ The idea of each ‘terror’ (state sanctioned or by an extremist group) feeding off each other is similar to what Muhammad Hee described to me when he talked about right wing hate groups in Europe and extremist Muslim group feeding off each other’s perceptions, hate and agenda.²²⁶ Mamdani further asserts that ‘Bad’ Muslims are not always the ones who dissent against state or US policies. There is thus a need to learn the difference between legit terror and justified nationalism.²²⁷ But unfortunately extremists leverage on reasoning based on legitimate issues, develop rational arguments based on the origins of these issues and ultimately point it towards causalities that engender hate and destructive end state choices.

²²³ Mamdani, *Good Muslim, bad Muslim*, 45-46

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 61-62, 251

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 252

²²⁶ See account by Mr Muhammad Hee given on page 339-340

²²⁷ Mamdani, *Good Muslim, bad Muslim*, 251-260

This can lead one to question why so few Muslims are actually involved in extremism if there is logic and rationality in extremist narratives. Logical / rational considerations are not always the prime driver for an individual to subscribe to an argument. Intuitive thinking and moral persuasions play an equally important or greater role and rightfully so. If there is one thing we can learn from humanity's experience with ethnic genocide, it is how ideologies and arguments can be pitched with such coldly convincing rationality that it can move individuals to making morally abhorrent choices. It is our morality that guides us towards negotiated, viable and acceptable end-states. This combined with credible counter rationality is sometimes the only bulwark against extremist arguments.

Furthermore, for an extremist sympathiser to move onto executing terrorist acts requires tactical considerations which are in terms of opportunity cost, time and alternate modes that involve less risk to the individual. All of these considerations are typical of the rational choice theory. Merton mentions how 'rebellion' as a form of social adaptation is constrained by calculation of personal advantage and fear of punishment.²²⁸ Furthermore an individual's journey to extremism as described by theories that explain the radicalisation process emphasise social tipping points. Moving past sympathising to violence entails considerable effort. Simply put, it is not easy for one to leave everything behind and join a militant group. Extremist narratives have often attested to this. It takes a very determined individual to move to this stage and it is something not every sympathiser is prepared to do.

²²⁸ Merton ,146

In summary, the dominant theories presented can be categorized into four main groups. One revolves around the role played by socialization. (E.g social networks, counter cultures, societal presence, differential association, social control, social learning, social movement theories and social identity). Psychological reasons form the other group. (E.g cognitive openings, moral disengagement, cognitive dissonance, humiliation by proxy, emotive resonance, and the influential part played by charismatic authority figures and activists.) The other categories of theories allude to some form of rational calculations that are utilitarian or the overarching influence of ideologies. (religious ideologies, rational choice theory, resource mobilization, social incentives etc) The final categorization would be theories that focus on the centrality of the framing aspect of the argument, how this is interpreted by the individual and how it finds resonance. While there have been attempts to amalgamate all aspects of this radicalization paradigm (Social, economic, political, cultural, psychological, rational etc), it is in the framing aspect that the 'logical structure' gets constructed and interpreted in such a manner as to bring out the rational / logical characteristics of the narrative. It is this logical framing aspect that is neglected in the theories described.

CHAPTER 3

THE METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK EMPLOYED

The main methodology being employed in this study would be content analysis of extremist Muslim websites. Content analysis is the most optimal methodology given the inaccessible nature of the phenomenon being studied, namely extremist Muslim groups, their ideologues and their sympathisers.

We start with delineating the content in extremist ideology and discourses according to the themes and argumentation logics²²⁹ (*Rational, poetic, dialectic, rhetoric, sophistic*) they espouse. These themes and argumentation mechanisms illustrate how the narrative is framed situationally to achieve resonance within the targeted social milieu. In many ways this is akin to the social constructivist approach which in this case seeks to see the social reality that is constructed through the discourse and interactions²³⁰ over the extremist website forums. This relates to how emotions are conceptualised²³¹ as a result of the posted content and facts are constructed²³² based on interpretation or reinterpretation of the website materials. This can even extend to changing notions of self and identity that can come about by reading and internalising the website content in this case.²³³ All these constitute the various social constructivist approaches that the analysis will take

²²⁹ The nature of these 'argumentation logics' will be elaborated on in Chapter 5 of this study.

²³⁰ Gergen 1985 in Klaus Krippendorff, *Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology*. 2nd ed., (Thousand Oaks, California, Sage), 2004, 16

²³¹ Averill 1985 in Krippendorff 2004, 16

²³² Fleck 1935/1979, Latour & Woolgar 1986 in Krippendorff 2004, 16

²³³ Gergen 1991 in Krippendorff 2004, 16

based on the nature of the content posted.

For instance, a *Youtube* video featuring a lecture by Anwar Awlaki has a discussion forum below it where readers post their comments on the content of the video. The forum allows readers to interpret the lecture according to their particular socio – psychological lens. The discourse this forum generates then has the potential to reconstruct the ideological message at the grassroots level. This reconstructed form of the message is more ‘*raw*’ and elemental. This ‘raw’ form causes a chain reaction of more discourse, interpretation and hence further reconstructions.

Rhetorical analysis, “*focuses on how messages²³⁴ are delivered and with what (intended or actual) effects.*”²³⁵ This is precisely what the deconstructing of extremist Muslim narratives by *themes* and the corresponding *argumentation logics* seeks to do as well.

In summary, the methodology is being used to ascertain:

- 1) The delineated orientations reflected in extremist messages, i.e. the themes.
- 2) Evidence of other dominant theories or perspectives on the approach used in extremist messages.
- 3) The predominant argumentation logics being employed to create a convincing message.
- 4) How dominant themes and argumentation logics are being employed and framed in an integrated manner to create appeal.

²³⁴ Such as statements, lectures, speeches by key extremist personalities or ideologues.

²³⁵ Krippendorff 2004, 16

- 5) Evidence to indicate the presence (or lack of) of the ‘logical structure.’ This is the key ‘unknown’ in this research.

Website sampling framework

The question being asked at this stage is what is the criterion by which the websites to be analysed are selected and what is the sampling frame? Which leads to the more fundamental question of what exactly is an extremist Muslim website?

Literature tells us there are over 50000 extremist Muslim websites²³⁶. At this point we need to recognise that some of these websites are essentially activist and for obvious reasons do not explicitly advocate militancy. Some are more in tune with nationalistic struggles and may lead to some questioning if it is a fair comment to label them as extremist. A thematic template thus becomes very necessary. This allows the delineation of the extremist themes found in messages from such activist sites that do not explicitly advocate violence but do so implicitly by their polarized and absolutist stance that promotes hatred of the ‘other’. Due to the nature of the content and social movements they represent, not all are readily accessible as they frequently change sites. But the good news is that once a central website that espouses extremist thought is found, the links leads to all the other websites. There is a lot of existing research that has used methodological tools such as Social Network Analysis to map the virtual universe of

²³⁶ “Dr. Gabriel Weimann of the University of Haifa has estimated that there are about 5,000 terrorist web sites as of 2006. Based on our actual spidering experience over the past 5 years, we believe there are about 50,000 sites of extremist and terrorist content as of 2007, including: web sites...” see “Dark Web Terrorism Research : Research : Artificial Intelligence Laboratory : Eller College of Management : The University of Arizona”, *Artificial Intelligence Laboratory : Eller College of Management : The University of Arizona*, <http://ai.arizona.edu/research/terror/> (accessed August 26, 2011).

Muslim extremist websites. One such web applications is the one done by the Artificial Intelligence Lab, Eller College of Management at the University of Arizona. It is web portal designed by them which incorporates content management software to analyse the universe of, “*All web content generated by international terrorist groups, including web sites, forums, chat rooms, blogs, social networking sites, videos, virtual world, etc.*” As for the forums, the AI lab provides access to these forums through the “*Dark Web Forum Portal.*”²³⁷ The next step after identifying and accessing these websites involves constructing our sampling frame which utilises two key attributes of extremist content to identify them. This is namely the presence of *extremist themes* and the positive reference to *extremist ideologues* that espouse these themes.

The identifiers for extremist websites

Extremist themes

The problematic nature of defining terrorism also creates the same problems when it comes to designating which websites are extremist. An analysis of the literature on extremist Muslim ideologies presented in the earlier chapter helps us to narrow down the under mentioned preliminary thematic categories which can be said to be characteristic of extremist Muslim narratives. More themes will be discovered in the course of the research. These preliminary themes help to decide if the narrative being examined is extremist in nature or just critical. Essentially an extremist Muslim website would show any one of the following themes in their content:

²³⁷ Dark Web Terrorism Research.

1) **Essentialist intolerance:** This is referring to narratives that reflect a hateful intolerance to deviations in thought and practice from what the Muslim extremist considers as unadulterated authentic versions of thought, belief and practice. There needs to be some clarification here. It is the intolerance aspect stemming from a narrow interpretation of Islam that we are looking for to demarcate extremist content. Very often this kind of essentialising also manifests itself in creating an attitude towards violence as an inevitable solution. This ties in with eschatological 'end state' logic as well. Everything is essentialised towards an 'end of days' or 'final battle' between good and evil, where the downtrodden such as themselves are the ones that are saved. Every action has to contribute to this and everything else in day to day life pales compared to the preparation for the final hour when they will be triumphant against those who oppressed them for so long.

2) An **attitude towards violence as an inevitable solution**. The presence of violence and ideologies that glorify militancy are seemingly straightforward demarcators. But one that targets an actual creed, religion or culture is all the more extremist as they do not just limit the confrontation to nationalistic struggles of any political / national entity, but rather xenophobically condemn or demonise the entire religious or cultural identity of the perceived enemy. This makes the process of dehumanising the 'other' all the more easier.

- 3) **A dualistic (Absolutist) attitude** – this is one of the key components of extremist attitudes. The actor only sees things as right and wrong and there is no middle ground. Good and Bad. Us versus Them. This absolutist attitude demonises the enemy to the extent that anything associated with it is also a justifiable target.

- 4) **An attitude of demonizing or transference of blame to the enemy** – A key point in demonizing the enemy and blame transference is that it empowers the actor. When someone's life is falling apart, what better way to mobilise oneself than by blaming an enemy that they can project their hate and reason for deterioration towards. Demonising the “other” in society also creates the condition by which individuals with similar attitudes gravitate towards each other, mobilise and create further mutually reinforced feelings of empowerment.

- 5) **An injustice frame;** - This is where keywords and phrases in the narrative focus predominantly on the victimisation resulting from hypocrisy, unjust actions, broken promises / treaties, lack of redress for harm or crimes inflicted, etc. In extremist narratives as will be shown, there are instances when emotive incitement in the injustice frame is also coupled with factual data.

- 6) **The ‘saviour syndrome’** – A glorification of the task they are undertaking as a crusade of right against wrong, good against evil or in the name of divine vengeance or retribution. There is usually reference to some form of charismatic or religious authority as the point of validation for their cause.

Even activist social movements that do not explicitly pitch violent solutions can expound on any of the above six themes. Such themes if espoused in activist social movements may be presented in subtle, low key discourse that is implicitly referred to. But the very nature of such themes imbedded in their narratives creates the opportunity for a gateway into full blown militancy.²³⁸

Extremist ideologies

Another identifier for extremist Muslim websites is the presence of populist radical / extremist Muslim ideologues/ ideologies in their narratives. This is also necessary as the six themes mentioned in the earlier section are not all encompassing of the kind of themes reflected in extremist Muslim narratives. Therefore, it is necessary to pick websites that already glorify and support well known extremist Muslim ideologies / ideologues. Such ideological literature has been the well-spring for much of the extremist Muslim narratives over the internet today.

The undermentioned categories of ideological literature help set the parameters by which the websites for analysis are selected. Literature on extremist Muslim ideologies can effectively be summed into the following five categories:

²³⁸ To illustrate this, here is an example of a HUT activist member who later became a suicide bomber. See, David Bamber and Daniel Foggo, "MI5 admits: we let suicide bombers slip through net - Telegraph", *Telegraph.co.uk - Telegraph online, Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph – Telegraph*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/1429143/MI5-admits-we-let-suicide-bombers-slip-through-net.html> (accessed November 7, 2011).

- 1) The Qutubian genre of Islamist ideologies that have served as the basis of Jihadist networks and are now represented in the internet by the ideology of Al-Qaeda²³⁹. Al-Qaeda now claims geographical subsets that its proponents cite as ‘branches’ of this terrorist organization. (*e.g Al-Qaeda in the Maghrib, Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula etc*)
- 2) Populist, ‘new-age’ and educated extremist Muslim ideologues who have a mass following over the Internet. Many of these ideologues having lived in the West can connect well with an English speaking audience. (*Anwar Awlaki, Shiekh Feiz Muhammad, Adam Gadahn, Germany’s Bekkay Harrach, Abu Musab Al-Suri, Abu Yahya al-Libi, Abu Bakr Naji*²⁴⁰)
- 3) Iranian Revolutionary Shiite ideologies that are espoused by militant organisations like Hezbollah.
- 4) Ideologies specific to liberations struggles in Palestine and those espoused by Hamas, including those now related to the Iraqi conflict.
- 5) The European genres of extremist Muslim ideologies that are more activist in nature and usually do not explicitly advocate violence. But there are numerous instances where elements of extremist thought and ideologies pepper their discourse. Besides focusing on social issues concerning the Muslim minority in Europe, they also connect to

²³⁹ “Shortly before the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, Azzam and bin Laden decided to form a new vanguard group—al-Qaeda al-Sulbah (*The Solid Base*). This concept is commonly attributed to the Egyptian theorist Sayyid Qutb. He envisaged a revolutionary Muslim vanguard that would overturn un-Islamic regimes in the Middle East and establish Islamic rule.” One of the main ideas of the Qutubian framework that underlie al-Qaeda is the concept of the revolutionary vanguard to overthrow un-islamic regimes. See Rohan Gunaratna, "Al Qaeda's Ideology", *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, <http://www.currenttrends.org/research/detail/al-qaedas-ideology> (accessed November 7, 2011).

²⁴⁰ ‘*Four Adaptations of Jihad*’, Control Risks 2010, p 1-7

broader Muslim struggles outside their national boundaries. Two in particular are representative of this. Those espoused by spinoffs from the now defunct *Al-Muhajiroun* (Omar Bakhri, his followers and counterparts in the UK) and its active manifestations after the movement dissolved and that of the *Hizb ut Tahrir*. In many ways these ideologies have been shaped by an activist environment that is somewhat tolerated in Europe. This has created the best opportunity to glimpse into the social and cultural dynamics behind relatively unrestricted Muslim extremist thought.

The study of such activist groups that espouse extremist thought but have not moved to outright militancy shows the formative indoctrinal dynamics that lead to the entrenchment of extremist belief systems and eventual militancy.

6) **South East Asian (SEA) extremist ideologies** such as those originating in Indonesia. Their origins are related to the Qutubian and Mawdudian genre of Islamist ideologies but over time have taken on a form and substance unique to them. SEA extremist ideologies while relating to local issues have been shaped very much by popular Middle Eastern extremist literature such as that of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Musab Al-Suri whose latest works translated into *Bahasa Indonesia* shape the strategic focus of Jihad in Indonesia.²⁴¹ Jihadi Militancy in SEA has also been shaped very much by the political, social and economic forces that have influenced the respective

²⁴¹ International Crisis Group. "INDONESIAN JIHADISM: SMALL GROUPS, BIG PLANS." International Crisis Group: Asia Report N°204, 19 April 2011, www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/204%20Indonesian%20Jihadism%20%20Small%20Groups%20Big%20Plans.ashx (accessed August 26, 2011), 8

SEA countries.

7) Ideologies unique to the geographical context in other parts of the world. Such as in Chechnya (e.g the Chechen separatist movement) or in the African subcontinent (e.g *Ash-Shabaab* in Sudan). They may have different geographical contexts but common grievances that look to the Extremist Muslim repertoire which appeals to the idea of a unified *Umma* (Global Muslim identity). The enemy may differ across boundaries but essentially represents a common 'villainous other' that is out to repress Muslims.

Finding the Websites

Chen et al, from the University of Arizona, Artificial Intelligence lab and leading researchers in the field of terrorism research such as Marc Sageman, have done extensive research on Muslim extremist websites and the empirical methodology used to identify and analyze them. By using computer based analytical tools, they have identified and categorised web clusters that exist in the universe of extremist Muslim websites on the internet²⁴².

The methodology used by the research project by Chen et. al. involved using existing information sources on terrorism, domain *spidering*²⁴³, back-link searches,²⁴⁴ group/personal profile search,²⁴⁵ meta-searching²⁴⁶ and downloading from internet

²⁴² See Annex B

²⁴³ Using a relevant seed URL and using a 'crawler' to collate web pages linked to this seed URL.

²⁴⁴ Sourcing out of web pages that have selected extremist web pages as part of their links.

²⁴⁵ Searching for communities that share the same interests.

archives and forums²⁴⁷ are all collection mechanisms employed by Chen et.al. The websites chosen by them represent the clusters grouped according to extremist organization and ideology as well. (See Annex B):

Another source of categorisations can be seen in the work of the NEFA foundation²⁴⁸ that captures the most current narratives from the dominant extremist Muslims organizations and ideologues. These are mostly sorted according to geographical region and sometimes by organisation. (See Annex C)

This research formed extremist website clusters similar to the ones above and using relevance / opportunity sampling has picked websites that are good representations of these clusters. Many of these websites are hard to locate as they are frequently shut down by the internet service providers and web hosts they tap on. (e.g. *Wordsmith*) Thus they move locations frequently. The only way to identify them is to use the links found in the more known, populist and stable extremist sites as a platform to explore the universe of extremist Muslim websites. Keyword search based on the most common words that appear in the discourse used in extremist Muslim literature is another identification tool

²⁴⁶ Using relevant keywords.

²⁴⁷ e.g. www.archive.org offers historical snapshots of an old website that has closed. Given the temporal nature of such websites, this is a useful tool for environmental scanning for such sites.

²⁴⁸ The Nine Eleven Finding Answers Foundation (NEFA Foundation) (<http://www1.nefafoundation.org/documents.html>) is a nonprofit organization engaged in terrorism research and analysis, see. "FARC international network sophisticated - UPI.com." Latest news, Latest News Headlines, news articles, news video, news photos - UPI.com. http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2008/09/23/FARC-international-network-sophisticated/UPI-18411222207348/ (accessed November 27, 2011).

which helps to form a lexicon of Jihadist keywords. Some of the words from this lexicon that have proven to be useful in this study as they led to pertinent extremist material are as follows:

- 1) *Mujahid*,
- 2) *Mujahideen*,
- 3) *Martyr*
- 4) *Jihad*
- 5) *Resistance*
- 6) *Fight*
- 7) *Oppression*

The keyword, '*Mujahid*' has proven to be of particular importance as many extremist websites often refer to their members as this. Labels such as terrorist, extremist, Islamist and jihadist are labels Western literature has given them, which they sometimes throw back at the West using a positive spin on the label. Furthermore *Mujahid* (A Warrior for God) is a term of honour with religious legitimacy. Hence one of the best ways to identify extremist narratives is simply by how they address themselves.

Once the website is identified, the webpage files or text from the website are saved and archived on disk. This is because of the temporal nature of most of these websites. Within a few days the website might get closed, altered or moved to another location. At times, the Internet Archives, "Wayback Machine"²⁴⁹ application available on

²⁴⁹ "Internet Archive: Wayback Machine", *Internet Archive: Digital Library of Free Books, Movies, Music & Wayback Machine*, <http://www.archive.org/web/web.php> (accessed October 22, 2011).

the internet can help to locate these moribund sites. But there are times when the website is also no longer even stored in these archives. In this study, whenever the texts from extremist websites and forums are quoted, the footnote will indicate the website address of the active site. If the site or text is no longer available, an alternative site will be quoted or the date when the text or video narrative was captured together with the name of the web resource that used to host it.

Websites Chosen

A final cross reference would also come from present literature and research that has identified the most populist extremist Muslim websites some of which are the official websites of popular extremist Muslim movements or ideologues. These common and populist websites are in many the gateway towards more extremist content available on the internet. In summary, the sampling frame relies on the three determinants described earlier. Namely:

1. Websites belonging to prominent extremist Muslim organisations.
2. Using popular keywords in the Jihadi lexicon and using the *Dark Web* tool for searching through extremist Muslim forums.
3. Populist extremist Muslim websites already identified by present research and sorted according to region or movements.

Based on the above, the websites chosen for analysis are shown in Annex D. The

key contemporary ideological works from prominent extremist Muslim ideologues sourced out from the websites selected for analysis can be seen in Annex E. These have been sorted according to geographical and movement type clusters as shown in Annex F.

'Inspire' – the magazine of al-Qaeda

One of the main sources of extremist Muslim narratives for analysis came from the *'Inspire'* on-line magazine. This is touted to be the 'official' magazine of al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula. The magazine is said to be the brainchild of American blogger, Samir Khan who also produced popular Jihadist blogs on the Internet.²⁵⁰ *Inspire* is chosen as one of the main source of narratives for analysis for the simple reason that it allows in many ways to capture a highly detailed '*snapshot*' / representation of dominant global extremist Muslim narratives. *Inspire* also has thematic special editions that have articles by prominent contemporary extremist Muslim ideologues in response to major attacks such as the UPS parcel bomb plot or dedicated to the changes seen in the 'Arab spring' which saw the removal of leaders such as Mubaraq in Egypt and Ben Ali in Tunisia.

Inspire is a sophisticated and evolved extension of similar magazines by al-Qaeda in the past which had a limited reach because they were mainly in Arabic. Bouchaib Silm (2006) a former researcher from ICPVTR (International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Nanyang Technological University) who did extensive research on extremist websites describes the general content of such magazines as Al Qaeda's on line

²⁵⁰ Samir Khan: American Blogger and Al Qaeda Propagandist: Introduction", *ADL: Fighting Anti-Semitism, Bigotry and Extremism*, http://www.adl.org/main_Terrorism/samir_khan.htm (accessed August 26, 2011).

magazine 'Al Battar'. Its content included:

- 1) Articles on their ideology
- 2) Book produced
- 3) Comments and religious views
- 4) Claims made
- 5) News
- 6) Instructional manuals for carrying out a terrorist operation
- 7) Videos
- 8) Biography of terrorists and their comments
- 9) Forums to post comments and to communicate

Inspire is in many ways the global *Generation Y / Z*²⁵¹ evolution of previous al-Qaeda magazines such as *al-Battar*. This can be seen in the type of content they carry.

The major features in this magazine are as follows:

1. '*Hear the World – a collection of quotes from friend and foe.*' & '*Inspire Reactions*': This special section is dedicated specifically to present the perspectives of mainstream views on terrorism. Quotes from prominent academics (e.g. Phil Rees), news personalities and agencies, (CNN, BBC etc) and major political leaders (US President Obama etc) are presented and used to support their arguments.
2. '*Feedback from readers*' & '*Inspire Responses*': This includes views from the

²⁵¹ Generation Z is also at times called the internet generation *see* Lucinda Schmidt and Peter Hawkins. "Children of the tech revolution", *Parenting - Life & Style Home - smh.com.au.*, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/parenting/children-of-the-tech-revolution/2008/07/15/1215887601694.html> (accessed August 26, 2011).

‘grassroots’ of extremist sympathizers. This also includes prominent Western journalists, news agencies, think tanks and academics who comment on what *Inspire* presents. In this section, they also write back to letters received from readers.

3. *‘Newsflash’ and other creative advertorials promoting Jihad:* This is akin to a war correspondents report on the latest in Jihadi battles and developments. In between the magazine are slick , graphical ‘advertisements’ that provoke emotive reactions. Such as a graphically enhanced photo of a baby being buried after an attack on Muslims with the captions, “*Your Child, our Child...*” or of marching Jihadists with the caption “*from here we start and in Aqsa we end...*”. There is also poetry on martyrs, about Jihad, their struggle etc.

4. *Account of Jihadi Experiences from prominent terrorists:* This includes the terrorist giving their personal autobiography, the story of how they started out in Jihad and what they experienced while in it.

5. *Ideological essays and articles by prominent and contemporary Extremist Muslim ideologues:* The works of Osama bin Laden, Ayman al- Zawahiri, Anwar Awlaki, Abu Musab al-Suri and many others are featured. The articles are very contemporary and directly relate to issues Muslims are experiencing globally.

6. *‘The Jihad Times’ & ‘What to expect in Jihad’:* Experiential ‘war stories’ from the battlegrounds of Jihad. Including practical tips on how to fight in a Jihad, mental conditioning for it, etc.

7. *‘Open source Jihad’:* - This disturbing component gives actual instructions on how to plan and carry out attacks including technical knowledge for making explosives etc.

Content Analysis of web forums

Forum discussions are crucial to this research as they represent the views from the grassroots. As such, the aim is to analyse the content from a sociological framework of symbolic interactionism. In this case the actions of the readers and the author of the web content are as a result of the meanings they ascribe to the content on the web. This meaning cannot come from static content. It has to be a dynamic process that comes out of social interaction as well. The reader handles and modifies these meanings through an interpretative process when coming to terms with the web content. This research is thus investigating into how the web audience generates meaning, creates identity, impressions of the 'other' being represented and interprets their social situations and conditions when reacting with others with similar mindsets over internet forums. Thus helping to understand how the reader of extremist websites actually define their situations and correspondingly behave according to these definitions.²⁵²

This research will demonstrate how analyzing systems forms an integral part of extremist website analysis²⁵³ as discourse over internet forums sometimes create a feedback loop. Website postings can in fact be shaped by the virtual discourse about its content. The forum also creates the opportunity to test interpretations and inferences

²⁵² In this case, the meaning of what the 'enemy' is to the individual is constructed by interacting with the 'objects' (extremist narratives in our case) and with the narratives of other individuals on the internet. This is similar to what Blumer is referring to when he says that, "...behavior, accordingly, is not a result of such things as environmental pressures, stimuli, motives, attitudes, and ideas but arises instead from how he interprets and handles these things in the action which he is constructing", Herbert Blumer (1962), "Society as Symbolic Interaction" in Arnold M. Rose. *Human Behavior and Social Process: An Interactionist Approach*, (Houghton-Mifflin), 1962, 181 -183.

²⁵³ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology*, (2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage), 2004, xix)

made from the websites in this research.

An example of a similar technique but on a simpler scale was used by Dr Peter Hopkins, School of Geography, Newcastle University in the research paper that he did on “*The University Campus, Government Policy and Religious Identities: The Experiences of Muslim Students*”. This involved monitoring the comments posted by students on websites in order to elicit the unreserved opinions of Muslim students in campus.²⁵⁴

When it comes to analyzing the discourse by extremist sympathizers, the *Dark Web Portal* developed by the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory of the University of Arizona was used. This database captured the discussion threads from the most popular Muslim web forums. Not all the conversation in these forums are out rightly extremist but many extremists many use of these forums to spread their message and express their viewpoints. The forums that were chosen in the Dark Web Portal are as follows:

- 1) *Ansar Al-Jihad*
- 2) *Gawaher*
- 3) *Islamic Awakening*
- 4) *Islamic Network*

²⁵⁴ Lecture given on 18 August 2008, Geo Lab (AS2 03-15), Department of Geography, NUS, 0330 pm to 0500pm, Organized by Religion Research Cluster and the Department of Geography, FASS, NUS, http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/religion/newsevents/e_the_university_campus_government_policy_and_religious_identities_.html.

- 5) *Islamic Web Community (Myiwc)*
- 6) *Turn to Islam*
- 7) *Ummah.com*

These forums were chosen on the basis that they have a more global reach with many of the discussions being conducted in English from members from all parts of the world. Dark web also has a translation feature for any text that appears in other languages.

The sampling frame for selecting texts from the websites and forums

The sampling technique predominantly employed relevance sampling (purposive sampling) for the following reasons:

- a. It is defined according to the research problem, which is to get past taken for granted inferences about the persuasive nature of extremist Muslim ideologies. This requires zeroing in on the narratives that would illustrate a multitude of themes. Be it the personal account of a Jihadist in battle, the eulogy of a suicide bomber, the ideological works of a prominent Jihadist or a heated debate in the forums. The *Inspire* magazine is purposively chosen for this reason as are websites such as *Kavkaz* center for they are in many ways a repository of narratives for their targeted audience.
- b. It involves systematically lowering the websites that will be chosen for analysis to

form a “*population of relevant texts*” which will then employ the use of random sampling within the clusters chosen after the population of relevant texts has been reduced to a manageable size for selection and analysis.²⁵⁵

c. The one limitation is that many of these websites are chosen for their English content. Fortunately many extremist websites such as *Kavkaz* offer translations in multiple languages including English and prominent extremist narratives are often translated into English in order to reach a wider audience.

d. Those narratives which clearly espouse a new theme or demonstration of argumentation logic are singled out.

The analytical framework

The delineating of extremist content first involves analyzing issues and narrations that summate into a categorical theme, then determining how and why they achieve resonance within the individual. This is done by a deductive process that uses a coding agenda that interprets the themes to ascertain the intent of the message. While deducing the intent, these themes are also linked to the social context that the authors are relating to. The analytical framework for content analysis of the websites starts with defining

²⁵⁵ Krippendorff 2004, 119

exactly what category of data we are looking for.²⁵⁶

Earlier on we have categorized three distinct content categories:

1. Ideological literature from prominent contemporary extremist Muslim ideologues.
2. The discussion forums
3. Extremist website content: Narratives, commentaries, web posts etc .

Bruce L. Berg also explains that a researcher employing content analysis needs to decide if the analysis relates to manifest content (physically countable categories) or latent content (interpretative reading of the symbolism underlying the physical data). In this research it is the latter we are more interested in and in particular the ‘deep structure’²⁵⁷ behind the message being conveyed in the website.²⁵⁸

Two aspects about the author are revealed in content analysis of websites. One is the targeted audience profile. Secondly, the possible intended meaning behind the message. In Vivo codes which relate to the literal words used by the authors in the narrative, describe more the behavioural processes and how the actors resolve problems.

²⁵⁶ Robert Sommer and Barbara Baker Sommer, *A practical guide to behavioral research: tools and techniques*, 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, 154-155

²⁵⁷ “Manifest content (those elements that are physically present and countable)...latent content...the analysis is extended to an interpretative reading of the symbolism underlying the physical data. For example, an entire speech may be assessed for how radical it was, or a novel could be considered in terms of how violent the entire text was...manifest content is comparable to the surface structure present in the message, and latent content is the deep structural meaning conveyed by the message.” See Berg 2004, 269

²⁵⁸ Bruce L Berg, *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*, 5th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2004, 269-270

They are vivid and ‘raw’ terms used in the narrative that reveal much of the local interpretative meaning.²⁵⁹ This study intends to use these vivo codes from the narrative together with sociological constructs from literature.²⁶⁰ These sociological constructs are the themes which reflect an extremist mindset that the literature has alluded to. They are summarized once again as follows:

- a. An essentialist attitude that is intolerant of other deviations.
- b. An attitude that requires violence as the only viable and inevitable solution.
- c. A dualistic attitude that sees issues in absolutes.
- d. Demonising all aspects of the perceived 'enemy.'
- e. An injustice frame.
- f. The saviour syndrome.

As the analysis progressed, new themes were discovered from narratives identified using the above sociological constructs and induced from in vivo codes that reflect the core of these newly discovered themes. A coding frame for these inductive categories (newly discovered themes) was thus formulated. This open coding methodology uses tentative inferences based on what is written or appears. The question that will be asked at each point of examination is “What theme does this text indicate?”

For e.g. if the text says “*the Zionist crusader alliance will now taste retribution from the hands of those who stand-up to injustice.*” Two possible themes may be

²⁵⁹ Anselm L Strauss, *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Repr. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 33-34.

²⁶⁰ Berg 2004, 271

identified in this sentence. One points to the retributive element and the other to the idea of a savior. This example is rather simple and furthermore the classical themes mentioned already have a coding frame. The trick is when a totally new theme is discovered. To ensure that it is indeed a new core theme, there needs to be evidence of it manifestly recurring in other websites as well. The findings chapter will later exemplify the nature of these newly discovered themes.

Ascertaining the argumentation logics used in the conveyance of these themes involves the creation of demarcation codes and identifiers for each logic demonstrated in the narratives being examined.

The Argumentation logic demarcation codes are as follows²⁶¹:

1. **Sophistic:** This argumentation technique entails using oratorical skills to deceive. This can also include the combination of logical and empirical elements which may be individually valid but are used holistically to give an overall misleading argument.
2. **Poetic:** The emotive aspect of the narrative is used to persuade. This can include the shock value of atrocities and injustices and getting the reader to empathize with them or experience the ‘humiliation by proxy’ that Farhad Khosrokhavar refers to. Other examples of poetic strategies in extremist Muslim narratives include ascribing to the sense of ‘altruism’ for a greater cause as well as supremacist and ‘savior’ arguments to appeal to the ego.
3. **Dialectic:** Critiquing of the ‘enemy’ is predominant in the text. Every criticism

²⁶¹ These argumentation logics will be elaborated in greater detail on in Chapter 5.

directed at the subject is negated and the response is to cite the flaws of the opponent instead.

4. **Rhetoric:** Almost equal combination of the sophistic, poetic and dialectic logics to create a convincing argument. It mainly refers to the art and skill of speech that leverages strategically on the credibility of speaker, the appeal of logic and reasons and the appeal of emotions. But in extremist Muslim narratives, it can also include arguments that latch onto popular arguments that already resonate mass appeal.

5. **Rational:** The narrative is logically constructed towards a specific purpose and utilizes empirically provable evidence coupled with deductive and inductive reasoning to prove the elements of its construction and to build up the argument. For instance the citing of empirically provable historical occurrences and events to corroborate a particular viewpoint and come to a logical conclusion. Put simply, the narrative shows evidence of instrumental rationality, epistemic rationality and deductive or inductive reasoning. This is the essence of the 'logical structure' theory.

Essentially as these themes are revealed together with the argumentation logics used to make them convincing, plausible answers to them might emerge along with further questions. Berg explains how *“these questions should lead you (the researcher) to other issues and further questions concerning various conditions, strategies, interactions and consequences of the data”*²⁶² Likewise questions emerging from the content analysis of websites will form the basis for critiquing current perspectives on extremism by Muslims.

²⁶² Berg 2004, 280

The research design in summary entails inductive category development followed by deductive category application.²⁶³ The first step in inductive category development requires creating a definition criterion from the research question and theoretical literature on the subject for possible categories. The initial thematic categories described earlier²⁶⁴ were formulated in this manner. After reviewing more text, the categories are supposed to be revised and reduced to main categories. This is how the newly discovered thematic categories which will be shown in the findings chapter were derived. Deductive category application requires formulating explicit parameters by which a text would fall into such a category.²⁶⁵ The end product would be a summative coding table that lists the themes discovered. (See Annex G)

To demonstrate the methodology being employed, an example of the content analysis result sheet is shown in Annex H. In this example cited, themes and argumentation logic are derived from examining a narrative in the Chechen separatist movement website, *Kavkaz center*.

²⁶³ Philipp Mayring, "Qualitative Content Analysis." *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1089/2386 (accessed September 26, 2011), 4

²⁶⁴ see pg 84-86 of thesis.

²⁶⁵ Mayring, 3-6.

CHAPTER 4
CRITIQUE OF LOCAL LITERATURE COUNTERING EXTREMIST MUSLIM
IDEOLOGIES

This chapter examines the works of Muslims scholars who counter extremist Muslim ideologies. They predominately use an approach that confronts extremist Muslims in their interpretation and understanding of Islamic scriptures from the Quran and Hadith. A caveat needs to be made at this point. Muslim scholars who counter extremism have a very hard task ahead of them, which they have selflessly dedicated their time and effort to. There have been reported successes as a result of their tireless efforts. But this approach might not work for all extremists. Furthermore, the reasons for abandoning an extremist mindset might have more to do with factors outside the realm of religion. It is too simplistic to assume that Muslims get radicalised just on the basis of religious ideology alone. While this is being recognised in studies on extremism²⁶⁶ and even to some extent in popular discourse²⁶⁷, we need to delve deeper into this aspect. It will also demonstrate how a debate on countering extremist interpretations of religious scriptures is at some point counterproductive and reaches a state of diminishing marginal returns. In this chapter we are not critiquing the validity of interpretations. That belongs to the realm of religious scholars. But more importantly, this chapter looks at how the sociology of

²⁶⁶ “The data shows that there is not the close connection between suicide terrorism and Islamic Fundamentalism that many people think. Rather, what all suicide terrorist campaigns have in common is a specific secular and strategic goal: to compel democracies to withdraw military forces from the terrorists’ homeland. *Religion is rarely the root cause*, although it is often used as a tool by terrorist organizations in recruiting and in other efforts in service of the broader strategic objective.” quoted in Robert Anthony Pape, “Dying to win: the strategic logic of suicide terrorism”, (New York: Random House), 2005, 38.

²⁶⁷ “SgForums : Singapore's Online Community – Actually religion isnt really the cause of extremism...”
SgForums : Singapore's Online Community, <http://sgforums.com/forums/8/topics/340609> (accessed August 6, 2011).

communications unfolds between counter radical ideology narratives and extremist narratives. It will show how quoting religion as the prime driver for getting into and out of extremism, entails falling into the trap of implicitly marginalizing the entire universe of factors that surround this phenomenon. It is not what religious scriptures say that motivates an individual per se, but rather what those scriptures and the use of religious labels offer someone. Identifying this offers the missing lynchpin to enhance counter extremism efforts. This should be done in a manner that goes beyond superficial and dialectical arguments that result in attrition. A dialectical argument that resorts to attacking the views of extremist Muslims instead of addressing them, leaves the door open for unanswered critique to fester and become convincing. Let us now take a look at some works by Muslim scholars who have written counter radical ideology narratives, local literature on Muslim extremism and how Muslim extremists actually critique them.

In 2007, *Taman Bacaan Pemuda Pemudi Melayu Singapura* (Singapore Malay Youth Literary Association) published a very comprehensive book that detailed the perspectives of professionals ranging from those in the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), political leaders and academics on the nature of Muslim extremism as evidenced by the *Jemmah Islamiah* (JI) Incident. That book was called *Fighting Terrorism*.²⁶⁸ With ‘error’ on the cover of the book in red bold letters to emphasize how religion has been misconstrued and manipulated by Muslim extremists and also how as a result of this, Islam as a religion has come to be misunderstood and associated with terrorism.

²⁶⁸ “Fighting Terrorism: the Singapore perspective”, 3rd ed. Singapore: Taman Bacaan Pemuda Pemudi Melayu Singapura, 2007

The perspectives in this book provide an insight into the collective views that show how Muslim extremism is seen in mainstream society in Singapore and predominately by academia anywhere in the world. This reveals areas of coverage which have not been given enough attention and the implications. More importantly, the findings chapter will later demonstrate how contemporary views that are overfocused on visible surface attributes take one away from understanding the intrinsic nature of this phenomenon. This usually has no singular root cause.

In fact attributing a singular causal foundation can be the very source of misunderstandings in our conceptualisation of extremism and subsequently in formulating mechanisms to combat it. From the collective narratives in the book, Muslim extremists are summarily seen as having the following attributes. They are against modern civilisation. They have an idealized return to a 'golden age' vision. The Islamic caliphate is the epitomic system, and solution to every problem Muslims are facing. Finally, their distorted version of Islam is the source of their extremist mindset.

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Therefore the root cause is seen as resting in extremist Muslim ideologies and the distorted idea of Islam that this generates. Grievances by Muslims and incidents of their suffering anywhere in the world are concurrently used to exploit the vulnerability of those searching for purpose and an understanding of Islam.

For instance Dr Rohan, while giving a highly comprehensive account of the

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

development of Jemmah Islamiah in South East Asia and its nexus with Al-Qaeda mentions how “*The strong religious overtones in JI’s ideology therefore eclipses all other types of motivation, be it political or socio-economic.*”²⁷⁰

Other comments further emphasise and categorise extremism and acts of terror by Muslims as result of an ideology that is based on the misconstrued and manipulated understanding of Islam.

...Political Causes might explain the nationalist or separatist who resorts to violence. Alienation and anomie might explain the anarchist. A sense of injustice and wanting to right capitalist wrongs might explain the communist. But the Islamist, and the Islamic Terrorist?

Security Experts are increasingly coming to accept that Islamic terrorism cannot be neatly diagnosed as stemming from this or that. There are no clear root causes. There are factors that give terrorists a pretext for action, such as the US-led Invasion of Iraq and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, but take these away and there will still be jihadi terrorists. One stark example: planning for the Sept

²⁷⁰ *Ideology in Terrorism and Countering Terrorism: Lessons from combating Al-Qaeda and Al Jemaah Al Islamiyah in Southeast Asia*, Rohan Gunaratna in “Fighting Terrorism: the Singapore perspective”, 3rd ed. Singapore: Taman Bacaan Pemuda Pemudi Melayu Singapura, 2007, 79

11 World Trade Centre blasts began in 1993, long before the US ouster of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.²⁷¹

There are a number of issues with such perspectives. To begin with, the central role of Muslims grievances and the resulting “injustice frame” should not be understated. This key “pretext for action” is a near constant in extremist discourse. If there are terrorists even after these pretexts are removed only implies that there is insufficient understanding about the nature and evolution of their grievances. A prime reason given by extremists as to why they chose such a course of action is the lack of viable alternatives. But seldom do counter-narratives address their grievances directly or adequately other than stating that extremist solutions are bad. There is thus an overfocus on the evils of extremism and insufficient or perfunctory focus on the points of grievance or in giving rational, credible and viable alternatives acceptable to the individual. A very dangerous vacuum is already being formed.

Secondly as the discourse spirals onto the issue of religion, Islam as a religion is put on the defensive. It becomes a situation of moderate Muslims in attempting to explain extremism ending up in a dialectical debate of why Islam did not mean this and that, it is a religion of peace and its sayings and terms have been taken out of context / misinterpreted, and how Jihad is meant to be more than offensive Jihad and emphasis on peaceful / defensive Jihad etc.²⁷² This degenerates to the point that it becomes almost an

²⁷¹ *Five Years after the JI Arrests*, Chua Lee Hoong in ‘Fighting Terrorism: A Singapore Perspective’, 2007, 167

²⁷² *Understanding Jihad*, Uztaz Hj Ali Hj Mohamed in ‘Fighting Terrorism: A Singapore Perspective’, 2007, 131-138

apologist argument that puts the focus on Islam and the fundamentals of the religion. This is why it becomes very necessary to understand Muslim extremist discourse away from the religious perspective. We apply sociological elements such as Religion etc only after this isolated discourse has been deconstructed to its elemental forms for analysis.

The final problem from such perspectives is that Muslim extremism is seen as a unique phenomenon. This leads to equally unique approaches based primarily on religious monitoring while negating the possibility that Muslim extremism can for instance also be explained from a social identity perspective similar to race based extremism. When it is lumped as a unique phenomenon, a ‘white supremacist’, a leftist terrorist from the 1960s and a Muslim terrorist are deemed vastly different specimens. The problem with this approach is that solutions based on combating absolutist and supremacist thinking and critical discourse to recognise grievances and working towards concrete solutions plaguing the social group in question lose emphasis. They apparently do not apply to Muslim extremists who are deemed to be primarily religiously motivated and misguided.

Another example that illustrates the problems inherent in taking a religious counter narrative approach is Habib Ali Zain’s article explaining Jihad²⁷³. He describes how one should show love for the ‘*Kuffar*’ (Disbelievers and non-Muslims) not for their disbelief but because they are a creation of God. Muslims should therefore desire salvation for them by their discovery of Islam. While this might be deemed by some to be another

²⁷³ Habib Ali Zain, "Jihad in the Way of Allah", *RRG - Religious Rehabilitation Group*, http://www.rrg.sg/subindex.asp?id=A294_07 (accessed August 25, 2011).

pacifist narrative, this is not the case as it does talk about situations where military Jihad is necessary. Some Muslim readers might appreciate the less than overly pacifist stance as they might feel the author is not overly pandering to the views of the state and non-Muslims and it therefore maintains a semblance of ‘dignity’ and pride. Zain quotes,

*“On the other hand, we have those who say, “WE must love the kuffar, be kind with them and esteem them. They are nice people and they have a lot of good in them.” People who say this have mixed truth with falsehood, just as those who say they want to kill all the kuffar, without understanding or differentiation have also mixed truth with falsehood.”*²⁷⁴

The narrative also how mentions that the Prophet Muhammad’s undertaking of Jihad was not for revenge or out of spite but for defence and to fight against oppression for the sake of God only. Unfortunately, extremists can very easily slip their argument into this mould as well by citing the exact same reasons.²⁷⁵

The point here is that the approach taken in this article does not directly address the commonly cited verses and corresponding justifications used by Muslim extremists even though it offers a balanced view of what is actually intended by such verses. But it is observed that the author offers an interpretation based on balancing this with other quotes from the Quran. It is not something that will be obvious to someone who reads the Quranic verse in isolation. Unfortunately, this methodology of Quranic interpretation is also employed by the extremists to explain their interpretations, for example in the case

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

of *Surah Maidah*.²⁷⁶ This again shows how such an approach only results in an attrition of interpretations. i.e. “you say...but I say....”²⁷⁷

For instance, in the extremist website called ‘*Al-Muhajiroun*’, the extremist narrative kills criticism by simply labelling anything not associated with their idea of Islam as *Kuffur*.²⁷⁸ The debate then becomes not about the issue itself but about its legitimacy in Islam. The extremist communicative mechanism here directs the argument into a religious frame suited to their convenience taking the light away from the issue itself. But having said this, counter narratives also have to be careful to not fall into this same trap of discussions on religious scriptures based on varying frames of reference instead of on the issue itself.

The religious rehabilitation group website also features an article meant to address misconceptions on Jihad.²⁷⁹ This well written and comprehensive counter narrative addresses some of the main misconceptions that will be of interest to a reader with little or

²⁷⁶ Quran Verse 5:51 - 52

²⁷⁷ See further explanation in Findings chapter 6, pg 224-225

²⁷⁸ “...Clearly, beyond doubt, all the rulers of Muslim countries are *Kafir Murtad*. In order to purify our 'Aqeedah and Tawheed, we must declare them *Kafir* or we too may fall under the banner of *kufr*. Here are 6 reasons why the rulers of Muslim counties are *Kafir Murtad*:

1. They do not fulfil the pillars of Tawheed
2. They ridicule the *deen* of Allah (*subhana wa Ta'ala*)
3. They ally with the disbelievers against Muslims
4. They adopt the *deen* of Democracy
5. They direct some of Allah's names and attributes to themselves
6. They legislate *kufir* constitutions (*kufir law*)”, quoted in “6 Reasons why all the rulers are *Murtad*”, article downloaded from www.muhammad.org, (Accessed Dec 24, 2010).

²⁷⁹ "Common Misconceptions on Jihad", Religious Rehabilitation Group, www.rrg.sg/subindex.asp?id=A264_07 (accessed August 26, 2011).

no knowledge on the conventional Islamic perspectives on Jihad. The narrative focuses on purely dialectical arguments by citing the tolerant and positive virtues of Islam but not directly addressing the controversial verses cited by extremists and their interpretations of it. The problem arises when an individual is ‘searching’ for what Jihad actually entails. Unless one finds exact answers to difficult and controversial questions that arise as a result of verses that on the surface directly support the views of extremists, they are more likely to find the answer given lacking.

For example, the article mentions that Jihad is only in self defence, “...*against oppression of one’s religion or on the part of those whose homeland has been occupied by a foreign and oppressive regime and they have been expelled forcibly from their homes.*” Then later mentioning Quranic verses such as verse 16:128 which says “*For Allah is with those who restrain themselves and those who do good.*” But unfortunately this creates the opportunity for extremist Muslims to scoff at such a narrative as they can easily associate the occupation by a foreign and oppressive regime to be exactly the situation in Palestine, Iraq or Afganistan. They can then bring in a quote from any of the so called “Sword Verses” in the Quran that on the surface directly summarises the need to “*Kill the unbeliever.*”²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ “Among the most problematic verses in the Quran are the so-called “sword verses” exemplified by the verse commonly summarized as “Kill the unbeliever.” Sadly and tragically, this verse has been quoted countless times both by Islamic extremists in support of terrorism against the “ungodly” West and by misinformed Christians as proof that Islam was spread at the point of a sword. But neither side is correct in its understanding of this verse.” see Sheikh Jamal Rahman, "Making Peace with the Quran's Sword Verse by Sheikh Jamal Rahman." YES! Magazine — Powerful Ideas, Practical Actions”, *YES! Magazine*. <http://www.yesmagazine.org/blogs/interfaith-amigos/making-peace-with-the-sword-verse> (accessed August 26, 2011).

A commonly quoted idea among Muslim extremists is apparently the idea of *Al Wala and Wal Bara*. Uztaz Hj. Ali Hj. Mohamad wrote an article meant to address what this idea actually entails.²⁸¹ This article critiques Al Qahthani's "*Al Wara wal Bara fil Islam*" on the basis that his perspectives are not impartial and is infused along with his personal views. It is meant to illustrate how perspectives from 'other' Muslim scholars can misguide Muslim readers if they have no access to the 'right' Muslim scholars to guide them.

In trying to prove the flaws in Al -Qahtani's understanding of *al-Wala and Wal-Bara*, the article by Uztaz Hj. Ali says, "*On a number of occasions, Al-Qahtani takes a swipe at Muslim scholars such as Syaikh Mustafa al-Maraghi, Syekh Muhammad Abu Zahra and Dr Wahbah Az-Zuhaili who advocate peaceful co-existence.*"²⁸² Then it mentions how the al-Qahtani is not impartial in his views and has "*infused his personal views.*" It then goes onto giving examples of Quranic verses²⁸³ which reflect Islam's tolerance and mercy towards others and their interpretation of what the concept of *al-wara and wal Bara* actually entails. But no example is given of the verses that the extremists like to quote. Furthermore the article ends by citing how important it is for "*The reader of al-Qahtani invariably must have access to knowledgeable Islamic scholars and experts for reference.*"²⁸⁴

The avenue now exists for extremist Muslims to give a dialectical counter

²⁸¹ Haji Muhammad, Uztaz Haji Ali. "Understanding Al-Wala' and Wal-Bara'." RRG - Religious Rehabilitation Group. http://www.rrg.sg/subindex.asp?id=A245_07&pgno=2 (accessed August 25, 2011).

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Quran Surah al-Anbiya, verse 107, al-Baqarah, verse 256, al-Mumtahanah ayat 8-9 and al-Isra' verse 70.

²⁸⁴ Haji Muhammad, Uztaz Haji Ali. "Understanding Al-Wala' and Wal-Bara'."

argument that simply says that counter radical ideology scholars themselves are giving their own interpretations and are not impartial in their views either. Furthermore, the highly subjective and judgemental statement on choosing the ‘right’ Muslim scholars can be countered by extremist Muslims questioning what makes counter radical ideology scholars decide who is to be deemed a “knowledgable Islamic scholar and expert” and what makes them think they know any better. Extremist Muslims then only need to cite their own references and scholars.

For instance, Anwar Awlaki’s footnote quote in his article called, “Allah is Preparing us for Victory”, says this with regards to counter radical ideology scholars and their pacifist views,

Al-Walaa means loyalty and love for the sake of Allah. Al-Baraa means disloyalty and hatred for the sake of Allah. The majority of Muslims are extremely ignorant regarding this as we hear many of them say that we must be tolerant of everyone and loving of everyone; this is absolutely kufr to say this since our allegiance is to Allah and we are ordered to hate what He hates. Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (fakkAllahu Asra) wrote an excellent book on this entitled, “Millat Ibraheem”²⁸⁵ and it has been translated into English. We suggest our readers to go through this vital book.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ See Annex I

²⁸⁶ Anwar Awlaki, “Allah is preparing us for victory”, 28

The extremist ideologue here simply resorts to citing other 'religious scholars' who use Quranic corroboration as well and dialectically opposes the stance of counter radical ideology scholars. The end result is that the approach by the counter radical ideology narrative is no more convincing than its extremist counterpart.

Another problem with the argumentation approach used by Uztaz Hj. Ali is that it rests mainly on giving alternate interpretations on what the concept of *al wala' wal Bara'* entails. But the article does not directly address in detail which Quranic verses used by extremist Muslims were misquoted and more importantly how. The simplistic explanation given is, "*surah al-Maidah verse 55 is by no means intended to lay the seeds of hatred to those other than Allah swt, Rasulallah s.a.w and Muslims.*" Extremist Muslims to earn credibility and persuasiveness to their narrative and to dismiss such counter claims then only need to give a resonating context based on issues Muslims can identify with.

For instance in the *Kilafah.com* discussion forum, a reader says,

We should be supporting our "boys", not the soldiers who are british, american, danish, german, dutch "boys". Our brothers and sisters are the muslims, who are being wronged in pakistan, afghanistan, Iraq, Kashmir, Kosova, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Egypt, algeria, morocco etc. Our Wala (loyalty) should be to Islam, not indirectly by trying to appease both parties (the muslims and the Kuffar) on an

equal footing, but by showing your support - in words and in actions - to the cause of bringing back Islam in the muslim world.²⁸⁷

Now the argument is no longer a technical one based on religious interpretations but a concept that gains credence based on the portrayed idea it espouses, namely loyalty and closing ranks against any oppressor.

There is a need to understand how viral an impression is when it is not countered immediately at that moment or is given too superficial / simplistic an answer. At the sociological level, mutual reinforcement of such impressions further entrench and extrapolate answers which are lacking or do not directly answer arising questions. When attempts are made to do this later in disparate instances and narratives, it is already too late as the unanswered and at times more resonating extremist perspective has already taken root.

What exactly are the ‘Sword verses’²⁸⁸ and other verses that have been used by the extremists. Some of the often quoted verses in extremist Muslim narratives on the internet can be seen in Annex A:

²⁸⁷ “Discussion post title: ‘Sufism and the Revival of the Ummah’ posted July 03, 2009”, *Khilafah.com*, (Accessed November 29, 2010)

²⁸⁸ Sheikh Jamal Rahman, "Making Peace with the Quran's Sword Verse by Sheikh Jamal Rahman." YES! Magazine — Powerful Ideas, Practical Actions”, *YES! Magazine*. <http://www.yesmagazine.org/blogs/interfaith-amigos/making-peace-with-the-sword-verse> (accessed August 26, 2011).

One of the most often cited and abused verse by extremists is *Surah Al maidah* 5:51-52, from the Quran which says, “*you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians as Awliya'(friends, protectors, helpers, etc.), they are but Awliya' to one another. And if any amongst you takes them as Awliya', then surely he is one of them.*” How is this verse that suggests isolation rationalised by moderate Muslims?

The book by Dr Ismaeel offers an attempt to counter the surface impression of this verse. The counter narrative by Dr Ismaeel is a dialectical argument that simply relegates extremist misinterpretations to a problem of context and not looking at verses holistically. He takes the trouble to explain some of the highly debated verses (e.g: *Surah Maidah*, Quran Verse 5:51-52)²⁸⁹, but context as we know can be highly interpretative. He himself says, “*Therefore, to understand any verse properly we cannot ignore its direct or indirect contexts*”.²⁹⁰ Very often, the author quotes from historical precedence which is exactly what the extremists do as well. The problem arises when extremists can also use a seemingly equally plausible context to the verses they quote. Muslim extremists do this on the websites vigorously by corroboration with other verses, hadith, historical precedence and the words of scholars. At the end of the day, for the layman reader, it can become a case of attrition, with equally plausible alternatives. One interpretation or another is chosen influenced instead on the social psychological makeup of the individual. Take for exam-

²⁸⁹ See Annex J for full text of Dr Ismaeel’s explanation behind the context to highly debated Quranic verses: Dr Saeed Ismaeel, "Muslim and Non-Muslim Relation." Religious Rehabilitation Group . www.rrg.sg/edisi/data/Muslim_non-Muslim_Relations.pdf (accessed August 26, 2011).

²⁹⁰ Ibid.,11.

ple how in the HUT (*Hizb Ut Tahrir*) internet forum extremists interpret this same verse based on the references they read.

One of the posts quotes an article that says the following regarding *Surah Ma'idah*,

What is special about Surah Ma'idah is that it is the last revealed surah of the Qur'an . Imam Qurtubee in his tafseer reported that Hazrat Umm- Almu'mineen A'eshah said: "Surah Ma'idah is the last surah of Quran. For that reason, what is described as Halaal in it is Halaal, and what is described as Haraam is Haraam". Which means that the verdicts in it are not superseded by any other Ayah or Hadeeth. Hence, if an event in the Seerah seems to contradict the implications of these verses we go by these verses and we assume that this seerah event has been superseded by Surah Ma'idah. This is a fundamental rule that should be kept in mind while reading the Seerah.²⁹¹

Here we see how extremists tackle the justification about this verse in relation to context and other superseding verses. If laymen to Islam were to read Dr Islamael's interpretation, it may not still convince them. This is not because his writings are incorrect, but rather they give alternate interpretations and narratives instead of countering the ini-

²⁹¹ HUT Discussion Forum title, "Is Jihad the way to establish khilafah?" (Posted: 31/10/2008, 6.01pm), *HUT Discussion Forum*, <http://www.hizbuttahrir.org/>, Accessed Dec 18, 2009. (The forum member posted an article written by Abu Ahmad called, "*Seeking help from the Kuffar. A dispellation of some common misunderstandings*" as a response in this discussion thread.

tial argument of the extremists directly. By the time this is done, it is too late. His alternative interpretation of the concept of Wallaa and Barraa likewise has similar qualifications behind the verses.

The same HUT post then quotes this Quranic verse.

-“When ye proclaim, your call to prayer, they take it but as Mockery and Sport; that is because they are a people without understanding.”

A comment from the forum member that posted the above article excerpt then wrote his views in between the lines of the article,

(Comment): How much have the americans and europeans made fun of our religious affairs such as: Hijab, polygyny, slavery, Jihad,. In the application for US citizenship polygamy is put on the same lines with adultery and other "non-ethical" behaviors. When Salman Rush-die wrote his obscene satanic verses, he was rewarded with a prize, because his book was meant to attack the Prophet and his wives. Moreover, he is being protected by the Kuf-far wherever he goes.

Here we see not a problem of interpretation or misinterpretation of verses but more of how verses are applied to social contexts. In this case the social context of Muslim minorities in the US and how such Quranic verses seem to directly relate to instances when they are ridiculed and suffer under perceived double standards. This is something

that will resonate even more with a Muslim who might already be feeling marginalized on this basis.

Dr Ismaeel also rationalised his argument in terms of how the need for objectivity is an Islamic principal as well. This entails the use of universal values of justice and objectivity with an emphasis on the latter and the importance of dialogue. But again extremists tap on the same argumentation parameters as counter radical ideology Muslim scholars. In this case, they too resort to the appeal of universal values to support their argument.²⁹² Let us take a look at another example of this “Mis-application.” This Quranic verse was quoted in the website *Kalifah.com* regarding US atrocities in Afghanistan and their hypocritical political claims, “*Indeed, the disbelievers are ever to you a clear enemy.*”²⁹³ Then, in the website *Islamicweb.com* and in *sayfullaah.blogspot.com*, this surah was also quoted to emphasize the hypocrisy of the West,

"And when it is said to them: "Do not make mischief in the earth," they say: "We are only peace-makers." Of a surety, they are the mischief-makers, but their [hearts] understand not" (Qur'an 2:11-12)^{294 295}

²⁹² This will be elaborated on in the findings chapter 6 of the study on the theme of universal values, Pg. 210.

²⁹³ “*Few words can describe the anger and resentment towards the occupier that wanted to allegedly counter terrorism in Central Asia only for them to be revealed as the true terrorists*”, then the mentioned quranic quote from Sura an-Nissa: 101 was quoted, this was cited in “What Happens in Afghanistan Doesn’t Stay in Afghanistan: The Pentagon and its Atrocities”, *Khilafah.com*, <http://www.khilafah.com/index.php/analysis/asia/11651-what-happens-in-afghanistan-doesnt-stay-in-afghanistan-the-pentagon-and-its-atrocities>, (Accessed Oct 13, 2011).

²⁹⁴ “*Allah , Most Glorified, Most High, makes clear in these verses, the depth of wickedness and foolishness of the hypocrites, and that when it is requested of them that they cease their disobedience and*

Muslim extremists in such sites make it very clear that claims by the West to champion peace are hypocritical and the West are actually the ‘mischief makers’ the quran is referring to. In anti extremist ideology propaganda, this very part of the Quranic verse which talks about ‘those who make mischief on earth’ is used to refer to the extremists instead.²⁹⁶ This is the end result of varied application of religious scriptures and debates over the interpretation and context. Ultimately it all comes down to label throwing over who has misunderstood God’s verses.

Muhd Haniff Hassan also tackles the issue of misinterpretations in his article.²⁹⁷ He critiques extremist Muslim narratives that claim verse 5, Chapter 9 of the Quran that calls for Jihad and the slaying of pagans, actually overrides verses that call for peace.²⁹⁸

their attempts to divide the Muslims, they reply that they want only to achieve peace between the Muslims and the People of the Book by their actions. But Allah makes plain to us in the second verse, that they, themselves are the cause of the corruption and mischief and that the reason for their willful deception and misguidance is their ignorance of the fact that Allah will send down revelation to His Prophet (may Peace Be Upon Him), exposing them and revealing their hypocrisy.”quoted after this verse Surah Al-Baqarah 2:11-12, cited in “Kitaab At-Tawheed, Chapter: 37”, *Islamicweb*, <http://www.islamicweb.com/beliefs/creed/abdulwahab/KT1-chap-37.htm>, Accessed Oct 13, 2011.

²⁹⁵ “*the tyrant rulers and the scholars that receive salary from them accuse the mujahidin of sowing corruption and causing mischief on earth.... This Ayah means that the hypocrites' behavior, and their claim that it is for peace, is itself mischief, although in their ignorance, they do not see it to be mischief. refer to ibn kathir's tafsir of surah baqara 11-12*”, quoted in “Mujahidin Cause Mischief on Earth? July 14, 2011 Thursday”, <http://sayfullaah.blogspot.com/2011/07/mujahidin-cause-mischief-on-earth.html>, Accessed Oct 13, 2011.

²⁹⁶ “*Sucide (Sic) Bombers and killers of civilians are misguided murderers NOT Martyrs (Shaheed) ,Fasiq Fasadi (mischief monger) NOT Jihadi, Anti Islamist NOT Islamist, Violators of Quran and Sunnah*” this was mentioned followed by quoting this very same quranic verse, Surah Al-Baqarah 2:11-12, cited in “Welcome To Quranwasunnah.com.” Welcome To Quranwasunnah.com. http://quranwasunnah.com/index.php?request=s_bombing (accessed October 13, 2011).

²⁹⁷ Muhammad Haniff Hassan, "Interpreting Islam On Plural Society", *RSIS (S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies) Working Paper Series 159* (2008), www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/WorkingPapers/WP159.pdf (accessed August 26, 2011).

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2

²⁹⁹ He then explains how this is an incorrect view as verses in the Quran need to be read in relation to other verses, the context behind the verses and the actual practice of the Prophet Muhammad. ³⁰⁰ His article is structured such that the views of the extremist are juxtaposed against an opposing viewpoint that cites verses that call for peace. The counter argument offered by Haniff later for the extremist view on the abrogating verse is simply that most Muslim scholars do not agree with it and there is no strong evidence to prove the abrogation argument. Haniff also suggests by quoting other scholars, how conversely other verses in the Quran that are relating to peace may actually abrogate the verse 5, Quran chapter 9 instead. ³⁰¹ Verses that promote peace, tolerance and inclusivity are highlighted as the response to the extremist argument. But this type of dialectical argument still does not directly address how this Quranic verse (Verse 5, Chapter 9) that talks about slaying pagans should actually be interpreted. The problem of misinterpretation is put down to context and the need to understand the Quran in relation to other verses.

This form of response leaves the door open for converse arguments to be used by extremists. Namely that looking solely at Quranic verses that focus on peace and tolerance is likewise not meant to abrogate all verses on militant forms of Jihad. This also

²⁹⁹ “Declaration of War Against Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places, PBS Online Newshour, August 1996; World Islamic Front statement on Jihad against Jews and Crusaders, Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 23 February 1998; Tayseer Alouni’s interview with Usamah bin Laden, Al-Jazeera, October 2001; Text of Al-Qaeda’s statement, AP, 9 October 2001; Sout Al-Jihad, No 3, 1424H, p.18, 25-30; Muhammad Abdul Slam Al-Fajr, Al-Jihad: Al-Faridhah Al-Ghaibah (Jihad: The Neglected Obligation), p.16, available at www.eprism.org/images/ALFAREDA.doc (4 February 2008). Al-Farj was a leader of Egyptian Islamic Jihad Organisation which Ayman-Az-Zawahiri also belonged to before its merger with Al-Qaeda. The book was the organization’s primary reference of its ideology; Al-Qaeda in Iraq, *Limaza Nuqatil? Man Nuqatil? (Why we fight? Who we fight?)*, available at www.tawhed.ws/r?i=3421 (4 February 2008); Hamd bin Abdullah AL-Humaidi, *Hatta La Tasma’ Li Al-Jihad Munadiyan (So you will not hear a caller of jihad)*, 8 Jumada Al-Ula 1423H, available at www.tawhed.ws/r?i=749 (4 February 2008)”, reference quoted in Ibid., 2

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 8

³⁰¹ Ibid., 10

forms the basis of the common charge used by extremists against counter radical ideology Muslim scholars as well. Namely, that counter radical ideology Muslim scholars working as lackeys for the state, the West and her allies want to change Islam into a pacifist form that will be more to the liking of their rulers.

Verse 5:51(*Surah Al-Maidah*) is also not addressed directly in this article. Muslim extremists easily cite incidents of Islamaphobia to prove that this is what the verse means when it says that Muslims can never be accepted by Christians and Jews. This may carry more appeal with disgruntled Muslims than any effort or approach to explain this verse in context.

Haniff's paper says that Quran verse 5:51 according to Muslim extremists tells them to, "*restrict from imitating non-Muslim behaviour, dress, hairstyle, beard etc*"³⁰² so that Muslim identity is preserved and they are able to distinguish themselves. This is not always the preoccupation of extremists in their narratives. Extremist verses more often than not use this verse instead to exemplify the grievances of Muslims and political issues which portray the West and their allies as being untrustworthy and actually against Muslims despite their pretence of friendship.³⁰³

The argument of 'context' mentioned by Haniff is also used by extremists. Context is a highly debatable topic. Haniff mentions how the ambiguous nature of the verses allows Muslim scholars to, "*adapt the teaching of the religion in accordance to*

³⁰² Ibid., 5

³⁰³ The themes discovered in this research are indicative of this. See findings chapter 6,7 and 8.

the changing context".³⁰⁴ This same argument can also be used by extremists to justify their context relating to contemporary Muslim grievances instead.

Finally, Haniff knows the argument used by extremists is that since the verse in Surah *Ma'idah* is revealed later in the order of revelations in the Quran, it should not be interpreted using previous verses.³⁰⁵ But the retort to this in his paper is that most Muslim scholars do not agree with it.³⁰⁶ This again does not answer the extremist Muslim criticism directly by merely citing what is deemed as mainstream views. Although Haniff correctly talks about how grievances slant scriptural interpretations towards the extremist context, he is discounting the fact that grievances can be standalone reasons for Muslim extremists as well.

Uztaz Haji Ali in his article mentions how Jihad on the battlefield (*Qital*) is the lesser Jihad.³⁰⁷ But no scriptural corroboration is provided to substantiate this. This is something extremists attack at length. But he instead gives historical evidence to cite how *Qital* is a last resort in the tradition of the prophet.³⁰⁸ He then talks about conditions under which Jihad can be carried out, such as "to be free from oppression and cruelty."³⁰⁹

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 20

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ "The above view is in contradiction to the view held by the majority of Muslim scholars who reject the abrogation argument of the jihadists because there is no strong evidence that the above verses were revealed to abrogate the other revealed texts,..." Ibid., 20

³⁰⁷ Ustaz Haji Ali Haji Mohamed, "UNDERSTANDING JIHAD." *Religious Rehabilitation Group*, www.rrg.sg/edisi/data/Understanding_jihad.pdf (accessed August 26, 2011), 5.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 5

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 7

Naturally once again, this very same reason can again easily be used by extremists.

One of the fundamental points extremists need to establish to get scriptural validation of their actions is that there is a “war on Islam.” The ambiguity of what ‘war’ entails works in their favour. Western foreign and domestic policy on Muslims when seen as being heavily biased and unjust, naturally adds credence to this argument. To someone who is directly experiencing or is aware of such injustices, the idea that there is a ‘war’ against Islam is all too real. For instance, it can be someone who is witness to ‘ethnic cleansing’ in Bosnia or reads about the horrific attitudes about some IDF³¹⁰ snipers who printed T-shirts showing a Palestinian woman with sniper cross hairs over her, crying over her dead child with the slogan, “*Should have used Durex...*”³¹¹

Counter-radical Muslim scholars should therefore also use in their counter narratives, religious based guidance directly addressing how Muslims should react to such “points of outrage” in a manner that is balanced, rational and not harmful to society. While the booklet “*Questions and answers on jihad*” correctly does this at a general level by citing that Muslims should “offer prayers”, “participate in humanitarian relief missions organised by trusted and recognised sources” and limit themselves to peaceful activism,³¹² it does not address the specifics about their “point of outrage.”

³¹⁰ Israeli Defense Force

³¹¹ See Findings Chapter 8, Pg. 357-358

³¹² Muhammad Haniff Hassan and Mohamed Bin Ali, “Questions and answers on jihad”, *ICPVTR - International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research*, <http://www.pvtr.org/pdf/Ideology%20Response/booklet%20jihad-english.pdf> (accessed August 26, 2011).

A second similar booklet entitled, “*Don’t be extreme in your religion*” is meant to explain the signs that one can “*observe to identify the ideology of extremists and terrorists.*”³¹³ Twenty three of these ‘signs’ are then listed in this booklet. While these ‘signs’ may be accurate to an quite an extent, some of these ‘signs’ of extremist ideology also include highlighting the suffering of Muslims and atrocities done on them as well as the critiquing of legitimate Muslim scholars.³¹⁴ The problem naturally arises when valid critique or emphasis of actual grievances get lumped into this same vilifying category.

The development of an effective counter-narrative needs to encompass recognition of ‘points of outrage’ which are actually valid. While the natural concern might be that we are validating extremists narratives, it allows the opportunity to demonstrate that we are capable of taking on ‘hard truths’ and not afraid of dealing with controversial issues. The major point of resonance for extremists is when such ‘points of outrage’ are dealt with superficially or given general answers that extremists easily critique as being ‘defeatist’ or pacifist answers given to please the state. It is this argument that needs to be defeated in order to have a highly effective counter narrative.

This is actually in line with a common argumentative technique that extremists use in which they preempt or cite upfront the criticism used against them and then

³¹³ Muhammad Haniff Hassan and Mohamed Bin Ali, "Don't be extreme in your religion", The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) & PERDAUS, 2008, 5.

³¹⁴ Sign no. 5: “*To further emphasize on the issues of cruel treatment and persecution faced by Muslims, you will be shown videos or other visual aids that portray the sufferings of Muslims and their armed struggle once in a while.*”

Sign no.17: “*Often, you will find attempts to belittle the high stature of religious teachers or groups that are not in line with the classes you attend by merely highlighting their weaknesses and deficiencies.*”

proceed to counter it head on. This form of rational argumentation has the potential to significantly weaken the extremist aura of being the ones who represent ‘hard truths’. For instance Awlaki in his lecture on “*Ruling on living in a non-Muslim country*” says how Muslims shy away from controversial topics that they will have to deal with eventually. He declares that he will discuss topics that mainstream Muslims would find uncomfortable talking about and that for such issues Muslims, “*Cannot push them under the carpet and think they would go away.*”³¹⁵

Thus the factor that works against counter radical ideology Muslim scholars is that they are portrayed by extremists and their sympathizers as shying away from answering ‘hard truths’ and only advocating interpretations that please the rulers. Take for example this quote that appeared in both the *Sallafiah Jadeedah* and in the *unjustmedia.com* site that stresses on the idea that,

One of the strangest things to note is that we are living in a time when some of the Muslims are embarrassed to quote the verses and ahaadeeth on jihad in front of their kaafir friends. Their faces turn red because they are too shy to mention the rulings on the jizyah, slavery and killing prisoners of war. They wish that they could erase these verses and ahaadeeth from the Qur’aan and Sunnah so that they would not be criticized by this world with its backward principles despite its claims to be civilized. If

³¹⁵ Youtube lecture by Anwar Awlaki, “*Rulings on Living in a Non-Muslim Country*”

they cannot erase them then they try to misinterpret them and distort their meanings so that they suit the whims and desires of their masters. I will not say so that they suit their whims and desires, for they are too weak to have their own whims and desires, and too ignorant. Rather it is the whims and desires of their masters and teachers among the missionaries and colonialists, the enemies of Islam.”

The result of that is that we hardly hear anything nowadays apart from the following phrases: world peace ... peaceful coexistence ... safe borders ... a new world order ... the calamities of war...

Those who proclaim the verses and ahaadeeth of jihad nowadays are subject to a number of accusations. They are called terrorists, extremists, enemies of peace and bloodthirsty, and are accused of wanting to destroy twentieth century civilization - ‘Umdat al-Tafseer, 1/46.³¹⁶

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There is a very important theme highlighted here. Extremists know exactly about

³¹⁶ “The Ruling on physical Jihad”, <http://www.theunjustmedia.com/Islamic%20Perspectives/Dec08/The%20Ruling%20on%20Jihad.htm>, Accessed Oct 13, 2011.

³¹⁷ “The Ruling on physical Jihad”, http://salafiyah-jadeedah.tripod.com/Qital/Part_3.htm#physical, Accessed Oct 13, 2011.

the ‘discomfort’ that Muslims will feel when talking about Jihad and how it might make them look ‘barbaric’ to their non-Muslim counterparts. They are also fully aware about what can easily be construed as common apologist arguments. Extremists therefore give the apologist label to any counter extremist ideology narrative that gives a benign view of Islam. A major point of resonance here is the presence of “uncomfortable issues” being narrated. Thus the impression the extremists are painting is that they belong to a chosen group of people who are not afraid to speak the truth behind issues no matter how uncomfortable it might be. They cite that since they do this, they are labeled as terrorists, extremists etc. Being well acquainted with the criticisms leveled against them, Muslim extremists cite back the label ascribed onto them while addressing criticisms directly. When there is no visible / audible counter retort by counter radical Muslim scholars to these supposedly ‘hard truths’, it has the potential to be taken as a given by the reader.

Extremists also do not shy away from engaging their audience. Uztaz Ali in his article “Understanding Jihad” goes into technicalities of interpretation³¹⁸ and says, “*In short, they (extremists) choose to disassociate themselves from any social discourses in the community.*”³¹⁹ This is hardly the case when you look at what HUT and other extremist Muslim activist groups are doing. They thrive in social discourses and this is the main mechanism by which they create attention and resonance to their message.³²⁰

Counternarratives sometimes attempt to explain complex issues in a simple manner for the masses. This is seen in the MUIS and PERDAUS booklet meant to address

³¹⁸ ‘Understanding Jihad’, Uztaz Haji Ali Haji Mohamed, 9

³¹⁹ Ibid.,11

³²⁰ See account given by Ed Hussain about HUT in Chapter 7, pg 274 & Chapter 6, pg 210-211.

what Jihad actually entails.³²¹ This booklet explains the mainstream interpretation that Jihad can only be called “*under leadership of an appropriate authority*”, i.e. the leader of a country, as armed jihad has “*huge repercussions on the general public.*” Their starting premise is correct and substantiated. Furthermore, it is cited that “*hence, only those in power and have received the mandate of the people are in a position to decide*”.³²² But extremists can easily counter this by citing instances when the problem is the ‘rulers’ themselves who are lackeys of their enemies. Hence, if they are being persecuted by these very rulers, it is obviously very difficult to get a people’s ‘mandate’ under such conditions.

Also the article cites, “*Only in a situation where a particular government has been removed by the enemy can Muslims be allowed to collectively carry out armed jihad to overcome enemies who are occupying their country.*”³²³ Extremist narratives have instead cited Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine as classic examples of this when they invalidate the invasion army facilitated local government. This demonstrates how our counter narratives have failed to address the extensions to such arguments.

Q 18 and 19 in this booklet are balanced and cogent answers to issues of how to respond to *points of outrage* and how violence as a first recourse is ultimately harmful and against the tradition of Islam. The common retort by extremists to this is that peaceful means are not viable solutions and the evidence is in the results. The booklet counters such an assertion by saying that “*History has witnessed many examples of*

³²¹ ‘Questions & Answers on JIHAD’, Muhammad Haniff Hassan & Mohamed bin Ali, 2007

³²² Ibid., 6

³²³ Ibid.

authoritarian governments who were successfully replaced without the process of armed rebellion.”³²⁴ But this needs to be expounded on and exemplified further. Even though their answer is very much on the right track in its intent, its very generality leaves a gaping hole for critique. For instance the reader is left to somehow associate this quote to perhaps refer to Ghandi’s use of non-violence (*Ahimsa*)³²⁵ against the British. But one can easily counter such arguments by citing other instances during this period of Indian history in which non-violence resulted only in massacres and that the reason for the British to quit India had reasons other than peaceful protests by Indians.³²⁶ This shows how giving general and placatory answers to complex issues can only result in hard questions arising from ‘*points of outrage*’ to remain without credible answers. Worse still, the very nature of such general answers leaves them open to get totally debunked.

In summary, counter narratives while giving a very precise and in depth exposition of the merits of Islam and what Jihad really entails do not address the critical and controversial issues extremists often cite. The responses given to extremists are classic dialectical arguments which expound on what Jihad is and the benign aspects of

³²⁴ Ibid., 18

³²⁵ "Ahimsa - Ahimsa.com", *Welcome to Ahimsa.com*, <http://ahimsa.com/ahimsa.php> (accessed November 1, 2011).

³²⁶ “...*I have neither the moral standing nor the slightest desire to disparage the courage of those who engage in non-violence.... But, non-violence, so often recommended.. has never ‘worked’ in any politically relevant sense of the word, and there is no reason to suppose it ever will. It has never, largely on its own strength, achieved the political objectives of those who employed it... There are supposedly three major examples of successful nonviolence: Gandhi’s independence movement, the US civil rights movement, and the South African campaign against apartheid. None of them performed as advertised. The notion that a people can free itself literally by allowing their captors to walk all over them is historical fantasy...*” see "Gandhi’s influence upon the British decision to quit India “m-i-n-i-m-a-!”: UK PM Lord Clement Atlee - World Politics - Zimbio", *Zimbio - Interactive Magazine*, <http://www.zimbio.com/World+Politics/articles/4132/Gandhi+influence+upon+British+decision+quit> (accessed November 28, 2011).

Islam. Sometimes counter narratives give simplistic answers to complex and controversial issues. While there is critique of common extremist Muslim claims, there is little done when extremists retort with counter claims. This creates a situation where their counter claims remain largely unaddressed. What would be very effective would be a point by point and sustained rebuttal of everything populist extremist ideologues like Awlaki cite that goes beyond addressing issues of religious scriptures and their interpretation.

A fundamental question needs to be asked at this stage. Religious motivation definitely plays a big part in creating an extremist mindset. But is it the main factor for persuasion? The Institute of Peace did a special report on, “Countering Radicalisation in America: Lessons from Europe.” The report categorically said, “*The role of religion in the radicalisation process is debated, but theories that set aside ideology and religion as factors in the radicalisation of Western jihadists are not convincing.*”³²⁷ The report also adds that when support is given to organisations and individuals that challenge the Jihadist religious ideology, they unwittingly play into the hands of extremists by proving that there is a ‘war on Islam’ as the state itself wants a form of Islam that does not resist it. They also quote the RRG of Singapore to say that Singapore’s experience with the Jemmah Islamiah (JI) group is that JI’s “*simplistic, literal, interpretation extinguishes centuries of Mainstream Islamic intellectual tradition*” and “*can only be de-legitimized by ideological and theological refutation.*”³²⁸ This is in many ways reflective of the

³²⁷ Lorenzo Vidino, "Countering Radicalisation in America | United States Institute of Peace", *United States Institute of Peace*, <http://www.usip.org/publications/countering-radicalisation-in-america> (accessed August 26, 2011).

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-4

Singapore experience in handling extremism.

While there is merit to both sides of the argument, the findings in this study will show how extremist narratives are at times anything but simplistic and if they are, it is with a purpose. They also employ rational argumentation that show a high degree of intellectual analysis, albeit highly abhorrent and wrong in their ultimate conclusions and suggested actions. To get an idea of how other factors besides religion might play a more dominant role in radicalization, we look at an interview done in Malay with a former JI member that was telecast on Singapore Television.³²⁹

Interviewer: “From your perspective, in the process of your quest for the truth, what was the biggest revelation that succeeded in changing your mindset?”

Former JI member: “While undergoing counselling, one day, while I was in detention, I thought about what I had gone through and reflected on my experiences.

I realised that I had lost a lot of time.

I wasted my youth, when I could have continued with my studies and lived life as a normal person.

Because I was detained indefinitely, I did not know when I would be released.

It was then that I feared for my future, whether I would get

³²⁹ *Suria Channel Bicara Interview with Mamat Ep 1 and 2, 16 & 23 July 2009*, Film, Directed by Bicara Interview, Singapore: Suria Channel, 2009.

my life back.

That became a strong motivation for me.

I told myself that if I was given a second chance, I would change and become a better person.

I really repented and realized my mistakes.

Interviewer: Who do you blame the most for your bitter experience?

Former JI member: At first, I blamed my parents but they did not know of my involvement.

In the end, I was angry at the JI.

Because of them, my life was ruined.³³⁰

At the risk of generalising, we can infer a few possibilities from this narrative. One, the reason for his leaving was not primarily because he discovered and internalized the 'correct' interpretation of Islam on Jihad. The motivation to leave a prior mindset rested on more basic needs such as wanting his freedom back and regret over the life he wasted by engaging in such activities and getting incarcerated. While this narrative reveals to some extent this core motivation to leave an extremist lifestyle, it also alludes to the possibility of similar social psychological motivations that play an equal or greater part in indoctrination. When extremists directly quote religion as the sole reason for their motivation, sometimes there is a need to look further than that and not just accept what is visible only at the surface.

³³⁰ Part 2 of *Bicara* Interview.

Counter radical ideology Muslim scholars have a monumental task. There is a special category of hate just reserved for them in extremist narratives. Take for instance this narrative that appeared in the “*clearguidance forum*.”

It seems to me as if the scholars that are residing in Saudi Arabia & are giving fatwas are under pressure from the Saudi government to give fatwas that can help them in their political agenda or do not go against their hypocritical ways. That is why the genuine scholars either leave Saudi Arabia or end up in jail. This is also why many people call the scholars of the kingdom the weapons of the Saudi government. In my opinion it is best to verify fatwas given by the scholars in the kingdom with respected scholars in Pakistan and other countries. Best of all, get the opinion of a mujahid scholar i.e. scholars that are doing jihad.³³¹

As can be seen, this is just a small reflection of the total loss of credibility in state sanctioned religious scholars among extremists. Extremist narratives also insinuate that all these scholars only mouth state approved rhetoric. The main factor for losing credibility can possibly be relegated to the general impression that state sanctioned

³³¹ "Post entry 10-07-2002 10:11 PM.", *clear guidance forum archives*, http://clearguidance.blogspot.com/2002_11_03_archive.html (accessed December 6, 2009).

religious scholars never say anything genuinely critical about state approaches. This is reflective of the power behind alternate and critical discourse. This is especially the case when critique becomes so inaccessible and suppressed that it creates the conspiratorial impression that suppressed knowledge is likely to be true.

Take for instance this quote which appeared in the Hizb Ut Tahrir (HUT) internet forum,

“ANY EXCUSE NOT TO ADDRESS THE POINTS BEING MADE OR ADDRESSING THE QUESTIONS....YOU CAN TALK!!!!...YOU CARRY ON DOING JIHAD WITH THE KEYBOARD....LIKE VIRTUAL JIHADDI'S LIKE YOURSELF DO!!!!” [sic]³³²

As can be seen in this strongly emphasized quote, in the internet and probably outside of it, not addressing difficult questions is tantamount to evidence supporting the opponent's views. In some ways, questions which are not answered effectively can become one of the key points of persuasion. Action, even on the internet, appeals louder than words. This is why the need to engage Muslims in a critical discourse is now all the more pertinent to Muslim scholars doing counter radicalization efforts. They have already made inroads in this direction but there is still more ground to be covered.

³³² " Bombings! Who Benefits? – Post # 8 dated 24-10-2007, 10:26 PM", *Hizb ut-Tahrir Discussion Forum - Powered by vBulletin*, <http://forum.hizbuttahrir.org/showthread.php?t=1101&highlight=Islamic+Democracy%3F> (accessed October 18, 2011).

CHAPTER 5

THE FRAMING PROCESS: THE HABERMASIAN IDEAL SPEECH SITUATION AND ARGUMENTATION LOGICS.

Tuman cites how “...terrorism truly is best understood as a communication process between terrorist and audience(s), the meaning of which is socially constructed in the public discourse and dialogue we have about the subject.”³³³ In line with this approach, there are two elements that constitute the research approach for this study. They are the themes reflected in the narrative and communication process itself. The earlier chapter on the methodology of this study has described themes which are used as identifiers for extremist websites. This research will also discover more themes that have not been identified or explored sufficiently in studies on this subject, especially themes which support the existence of the ‘logical structure.’ The other aspect of the research looks at the *social construction of the meaning of the extremist message in and through discourse*. This entails a discussion on the framing process itself. As such this chapter focuses on the instruments for the social construction of the message. These instruments are what we refer to as argumentation logics. Of particular interest are rational arguments which are elements of the ‘logical structure’. This chapter will also demonstrate how quasi logical arguments are also imbedded in other forms of argumentation that are not purely rational. This study makes reference to the theory of communication by Jurgen Habermas and his ideal speech situation and how this applies to these mechanisms for

³³³ Joseph S. Tuman, *Communicating terror: the rhetorical dimensions of terrorism*, (2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, California, SAGE Publications), 2010, 209

persuasion. We will set the context for a discussion of argumentation logics by first examining the Habermasian theory of communication and what he means by the ‘Ideal Speech Situation’.

The Habermasian Ideal Speech Situation

According to Habermas, social action is either communicative or strategic.³³⁴ In strategic action participants have a goal in mind when communicating and are not looking towards reaching consensus and understanding.³³⁵ On the other hand communicative action is a consensual process by which actors cooperate to ‘mobilize the potential for rationality’,³³⁶ and thereby find a rationally motivated agreement. An argument is true communicative action if there is no suppression of arguments, manipulation, self deception etc. If there is a disagreement, then the ‘discourse’ process of argumentation and dialogue will take over. This process will then yield a rationally justifiable result achieved through dialogue. Different ‘logics of argumentation’ will be employed in Habermas’s discourse theory according to different types of justificatory discourse or validity claims. To Habermas there is a set of universal values and norms that will get a reasonable audience to accept the best argument. For logical arguments, the presence of empirical proof is one form of justification that is universally accepted. But

³³⁴ Baxter 1987, 40.

³³⁵ "Jurgen Habermas (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/habermas/> (accessed December 15, 2011).

³³⁶ Habermas, Jürgen
1984[1981] *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Thomas McCarthy, trans. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

informal logics that use induction, analogies and narratives also get employed in a “ritualized competition for the better arguments.”³³⁷

One sub component of the Habermasian typology of social action is concealed strategic action where the actor actually has other motives behind his message that his audience and others he is communicating with may not agree with if they knew. Or at least one of them might have the mistaken belief that all parties are communicating to reach consensus.³³⁸

In addition, Habermas, postulates an “*Ideal Speech Situation*” as one where power is not able to influence and distort the message and the argument that wins is the one with the strongest impartial evidence and which is most convincing. Thus the idea of what is truth is derived from consensus arising from this contest of messages put across.³³⁹ This ideal speech situation according to Habermas would fall under the realm of true communicative action.

Therefore, in the Habermasian ideal speech situation:

1. “*Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.*”

³³⁷ "Jurgen Habermas (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/habermas/> (accessed December 15, 2011).

³³⁸ Hugh Baxter, “System and Life-World in Habermas’s “Theory of Communicative Action”, *Theory and Society*, Vol 16, No 1 (Jan., 1987), Springer, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/657078>, 40

³³⁹ Ritzer 2007, 124

2. *Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever.*
3. *Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse.*
4. *Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires and needs.*
5. *No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (1) and (2) ”³⁴⁰*

Habermas advocates communicative action not just for its “rational potential” but also because the ‘dark side’ alternative of this would be what he calls concealed strategic action. That is the kind of action that is influenced by power politics and other social barriers resulting in the absence of open, free and undistorted communication.

Introducing the Five Argumentation Logics

With the idea of Habermasian communicative action in the background, we now need to look at the five types of argumentation logics from Philosophy as a framework to examine extremist narratives. These argumentation logics are what *Ibn Khaldūn*, the renowned Muslim philosopher from the 14th century described when he reviewed the works of Aristotle on logic. These *Kitab’s* (books) of logic include five which pertain to how analogical reasoning (the syllogism) is produced and applied.³⁴¹ In essence, they also relate to essentially five ways that people can argue and convince. This is namely through the use of, *Rational, Dialectical, Sophist, Rhetorical or Poetic arguments*.

³⁴⁰ Jürgen Habermas, "Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification", Trans. Christian Lenhart and Shierry Weber Nicholson, In *Moral consciousness and communicative action*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1990, 86

³⁴¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, vol. 3, trans. Franz Rosenthal, (1958. Reprint, London & Henley: Routledge [and] Kegan Paul, 1967), 137-147.

Aristotle's *Apodeictica* or *Kitâb al- Burhan* as *Ibn Khaldûn* called it, delved into the analogical reasoning (syllogism) that produces the knowledge in question and in particular how things come to be defined.³⁴² In rational arguments, in particular epistemic rationality,³⁴³ there is evidence that can be proven empirically and corroborated. There is also an element of instrumental rationality, which is the "*rationality which one displays in taking the means to one's ends.*"³⁴⁴ Both analogical reasoning (which looks at finding associations) and syllogisms (which base themselves on deductive reasoning) are logical arguments which become more convincing when there is an element of epistemic and instrumental rationality imbedded in them. In this research, we refer to narratives that employ analogical reasoning, syllogisms, epistemic and instrumental rationality as rational arguments.

Aristotle's *Topics* or *Kitâb al- Jادل* ("*disputation*") as *Ibn Khaldûn* called it, teaches the analogical reasoning used to "*cut off a troublesome adversary and silence one's opponents.*"³⁴⁵ Dialectical arguments as defined in this study, are adopted from this category and involve an approach in which instead of addressing the criticism, one counters it with the flaws about the opponent's position.

³⁴² Ibid., 140-141

³⁴³ "...the kind of rationality which one displays when one believes propositions that are strongly supported by one's evidence and refrains from believing propositions that are improbable given one's evidence..." Epistemic Rationality as Instrumental Rationality: A Critique, Appeared in Thomas Kelly, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. LXVI, No.3, May 2003, (University of Notre Dame), <http://www.princeton.edu/~tkelly/papers/epistemicasinstrumental.pdf> (accessed August 26, 2011).

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 1

³⁴⁵ Khaldûn, 141.

Aristotle's *Sophistici Elenchi* or *Kitâb as- Safsastah* as *Ibn Khaldûn* called it, "is the kind of analogical reasoning that teaches the opposite of truth and enables a disputant to confuse his opponent."³⁴⁶ For the purposes of this research study, the sophistic arguments we are referring to are defined as cleverly crafted but deceptive statements that come across as being very convincing. For instance sophist arguments can seem to employ rational logic and they may give the impression of being empirically credible. This is especially so if the narrative bases itself on little known and empirically provable facts which are connected creatively to mislead.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* or *Kitâb as-Khitâbah* as *Ibn Khaldûn* called it, refers to the analogical reasoning that shows how to influence the masses and to convince them to do one's intentions.³⁴⁷ The Rhetorical arguments we are referring to in this study are defined as populist sentiments or those advocated by the ruling powers. If these rhetorical arguments become socially entrenched, they may be taken as the truth.

The last book, Aristotle's *Poetics* or *Kitâb ash-Shi'r* as *Ibn Khaldûn* called it, refers to the analogical reasoning that shows the use of parables and similes that can especially be used to encourage either themselves or others.³⁴⁸ In the context of this research, the Poetic arguments used in the narratives examined, make use of emotive language and emotionally resonant references to win the argument.

All the above forms of argumentation may not (as this study will demonstrate)

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 141

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

exist in a pure state. Thus the analysis in this research involves not only identifying the purely rational components used in extremist narratives but also the presence of rational or logical components imbued in rhetorical, poetic, dialectical, sophist arguments and their effect on the overall pitch. In the next few sections of this chapter, we will begin by detailing the nature of each of these argumentation logics (*Rhetoric, Poetic, Dialectical, Sophist and Rational*).

The use of rhetoric in communicating extremism

Tuman explains how the process of communicating the ‘terrorist’ message involves a process of the sender encoding and the audience decoding this message. A situation of multiple audiences requires these audiences to decode using available tools. By this, he is referring to available mediums (e.g. mainstream news and information) that have created the ‘standard’, accepted and foundational knowledge on the topic of the message or discussion. Tuman ultimately sees terrorist messages as a process of persuasion and hence ultimately rhetoric. He recognizes the use of rational logic and arguments in the process of persuasion. The audience in turn reacts based on rational calculations and by varying their responses accordingly. This is illustrated in Giambattista Vico’s premise that human reality is “*constructed and this construction could be rhetorical.*”³⁴⁹ But ultimately this line of thinking fails to acknowledge the enormous influence of rational arguments in and of themselves, and not just as an instrument to create the overall rhetoric. This is based on the assumption in this study that rational (empirical/ can be proven) facts by themselves are what the decoding process by

³⁴⁹ Giambattista Vico cited in Tuman, 2010, 40

the audience seeks to achieve. In other words, there is an element of discernment in any audience that seeks to filter the rhetoric to analyse the validity of the claims from a rational perspective. This is what we have referred to in this study as the ‘logical structure.’ If there are enough of these ‘logical structures’ then the role of rhetoric is minimal as the ‘facts’ can seemingly speak for themselves.

For this research we use the pejorative view of sophists by Plato designates, “*sophistryas empty rhetoric- making arguments that sounded clever and logical but were really specious and with little merit*”³⁵⁰. Aristotle on the other hand took rhetoric as a skill. He saw an effective argument as one that “*contained one or more of three “species” of proofs*”³⁵¹ which are as follows:

1. *Ethos: credibility of speaker*
2. *logos - the appeal of logic and reasons*
3. *Pathos – the appeal of emotions.*

Labels and definitions according to Tuman also play a significant role. Primarily “*labels and definitions become frames entrenched by institutionalization and tradition which makes changing their meaning very difficult,*”³⁵² they have the power to empower or marginalise, include and exclude (i.e. creates the ‘other’ or contrast by which we understand ourselves), demarcate acceptable norms, values and views, intentionally or unintentionally distribute or redistribute power. They also have the capacity to create or

³⁵⁰ Tuman, 2010, 38

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid., 47

break alliances between disparate groups and help to legitimise and create respectability for certain actions based on how they are used.³⁵³ Thus, for example if an individual's action was described as simply a reaction to emotive motivations and rhetoric, this creates a label that infantilizes his rationale and subsequent actions. By contrast, if the action were to be described as politically motivated, this labeling would lend credence, as the act would be now alluded to as a form of strategic action. This can also be the case if the act was based on the rationale for self-defense. The key point here is that the rhetorical power embedded in labels and definitions should be recognized in any rhetorical criticism of extremist narratives. Likewise when a narrative implies or refers to classical ideology, then ideological criticism is needed to evaluate the extent to which the speaker's credibility is based on ideology³⁵⁴ as opposed to other aspects of the narrative that might actually play a bigger role. The deficiency of Tuman's work is that it implies that web discourse is predominantly rhetoric. This negates the possibility that it might instead be logical arguments (the logical structure) imbedded in the narrative having a greater influence.

Tuman's methodology for deconstructing an extremist narrative for rhetorical criticism and analysis involved the following processes:

1. Audience analysis.
2. Identification of rhetorical appeals. (Ethos, Pathos and Logos)
3. Identification of rhetorical figures of speech.

³⁵³ Ibid., 45-64

³⁵⁴ "Ideology refers to a collection of beliefs and values that inform and unify a group's worldview", quoted in Ibid., 57

4. Identification of the use of rhetorical fallacies.

Audience analysis requires knowing the social context and demographics of the targeted audience. This according to Tuman is important as factors such as emphasizing a common ground between audience and the rhetor is potent. Other factors include prior favorable exposure to the similar rhetoric and disposition of the audience to the rhetor.

Identifying the rhetorical appeal in any narrative involves a process of deductive reasoning in which *“This form of reasoning operates from the assumption that if certain statements - called argumentative premises- are true, then a certain conclusion must follow.”*³⁵⁵ The use of syllogisms comprising true major and minor premises to derive conclusions stems from the deductive approach to reasoning. Tuman further explains how *“More often, we find these premises embedded in the text of the speaker’s arguments as we deconstruct them.”*³⁵⁶ Thus deconstructing the extremist narrative for rhetorical criticism also involves identifying if the speech message is ethos, pathos or logos and how it is oriented to a specific audience.

There are six steps according to Tuman in how rhetorical figures of speech and argument are used:³⁵⁷

1. Accumulation – Where two or more clauses are used in succession to emphasise the same thing.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 117

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 120-121

2. Anaphora – Repetition of the exact same words.
3. Anti-study – Shows the appeal or flaws of the opposite state of events.
4. Catalog – Logos appeal, as if the speaker is aware of and considered all possibilities.
5. Personification – Referring to a country or religion as a person.
6. Prolepsis – anticipating the kind of criticism or refutation that the narrative is likely to generate, thus diminishing the effect of any criticism.

Tuman also cites rhetorical fallacies which give the appearance of being logical but are in essence really rhetoric. This is comparable somewhat to a sophist argument that is logically convincing but deceptive.

Rhetorical fallacies involve the use of the following techniques³⁵⁸ :

1. Example reasoning- but the example cited can be proved wrong.
2. Scare tactics to frighten the audience in issues that the rhetor knows is of concern.
3. *Post hoc ergo propter hoc* arguments - appearance of logical causation- a conclusion after the fact that is in essence a causal argument.
4. *Reductio ad absurdum* – claim is reduced to reach an absurd position. E.g. in extremist narratives, any personal slights are reduced to the conclusion there is a ‘war on Islam.’
5. *Ad Hominem* – name calling and critiquing the characteristics of the opponent to advance a claim.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

Rhetoric and Quasi Logical arguments

Perelman & Tyteca in their work on the contemporary application of methods by which rhetoric is used in argumentation, explain how quasi logical arguments lay claim to some empirical demonstration or formal reasoning of logic to appear convincing. But upon scrutiny it is realised that they appear so only when the arguments are reduced or simplified to an informal level that makes them seem demonstrative of reality. This reduction or simplification of the argument gives them credibility.

Furthermore, "Quasi logical arguments are presented in a more or less explicit manner. Sometimes the speaker will mention the formal reasoning to which he makes reference, availing himself to the prestige of logical thought..."³⁵⁹ Thus we can see how the impression of logical thought provides a high degree of respectability to any argument.

To defeat this argument the critique would either need to debase it on the basis of being an "*impassioned speech*" or offer a logical counter argument. The latter accusation can also be a quasi-logical argument. But it needs to be noted that, "*...almost every quasi logical argument also makes use of other kinds of argument, which to some may seem more important.*"³⁶⁰

³⁵⁹ Chiam Perelman and Lucie Tyteca, *The new rhetoric: a treatise on argumentation*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1969, 194

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

The following will thus describe the various permutations of rhetorical methods employing quasi-logical argumentation. These demonstrate how the syntheses of rationally constructed arguments with rhetorical elements create a highly potent mix. The presence of these quasi-logical components supports the idea of a ‘logical structure’ existent in extremist Muslim narratives, albeit in varying magnitudes. In this section of this study, illustrations are given as to how extremist Muslims might possibly use the various quasi logical arguments.

Types of Quasi Logical Arguments ³⁶¹

1. Contradiction and incompatibility - The critique based on calling the opponent's argument as incompatible, "*can result from the application of several moral or legal rules or sacred texts to define situations. While contradiction between two propositions implies a formal system...*" ³⁶² This is exemplified in extremist narratives that make use of religious texts as the final and definitive authority by which their arguments are true. Thus anything that falls outside is deemed ‘incompatible’ with the context of their argument.
2. The ridiculous and its role in argumentation - This is referring predominantly to the ridicule and sometimes humor that is generated when an argument is critiqued on the basis of contradicting accepted opinion or error of fact. ³⁶³ Thus this powerful, "*quasi logical argumentation by the ridiculous consists in temporarily accepting a*

³⁶¹ *Ibid*: 214-398

³⁶² *ibid*:196-197

³⁶³ *ibid*:206

statement contradictory to that one wishes to defend, deducing its consequences, showing their incompatibility with what is accepted on other grounds, and thereby inferring the truth of the proposition being defended."³⁶⁴ This is in a similar vein to the idea of *reductio ad absurdum*³⁶⁵. The power of ridicule should never be underestimated. In extremist narratives this can take the form of ridiculing a political leader on the self evident and ineffective results of his policies and very often by highlighting the hypocrisies involved using insulting humour and ridicule.

But conversely to defy the ridicule that goes against accepted norms according to Perelman and Tyteca (1969) requires courage and defiance. Aristotle explains how *"in order that a statement which is contrary to accepted opinion become a principle worth discussing, it has to gain the support of some eminent philosopher."*³⁶⁶ In extremist narratives this is done by citing the saying of the Prophet but according to their interpretation and context to justify their arguments. Very often this is seen in how they propagate the idea of an 'offensive' Jihad that goes against mainstream Islamic views.

3. Identity and use of definitions in argumentation: - Arne Naess describes the various forms of definitions. In many situations you can have multiple definitions based on the following:³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ *ibid*:207

³⁶⁵ "*Reductio ad absurdum* is a mode of argumentation that seeks to establish a contention by deriving an absurdity from its denial, thus arguing that a thesis must be accepted because its rejection would be untenable", cited in "Reductio ad Absurdum [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy]", Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/reductio/> (accessed December 11, 2011).

³⁶⁶ Perelman and Tyteca 1969,209

³⁶⁷ Cf. Naess, Interpretation and Preciseness, chap IV in Perelman & Tyteca 1969:210-212

" a. Normative definitions, which indicate the manner in which a word is to be used. This norm can result from an individual decision, from a command given to others, from a rule of which one believes that it should be followed by everyone." (The meaning of the term Jihad for instance can be dictated by a person or institutional body in a position of authority or influence. The issue then becomes not about the appropriateness of the meaning but more about the credentials of the person or body defining it. Extremist narratives and counter narratives may then go into debates resulting in attrition over credentials.)

b. Descriptive definitions, which indicate what meaning is given to a word in a certain environment at a particular time. (The meaning of Jihad can again be dictated according to context of the time period it is relating to. Extremist narratives might try to equate the state of Muslims today with events in Islam's past where Jihad became necessary. Counter narratives might conversely cite the inappropriateness of today's context and that the right to be a Muslim is not under physical threat as in the past and hence the meaning does not apply to situations the extremist narratives relate to.)

c. Condensed definitions, which point out the essential elements of a descriptive definition. (There is a more rational element here that might define Jihad according to objective parameters that constitute the essential elements of Jihad. The problem arises when even these essential elements are debated over, especially if these are based on religious dictates and scriptures that are already being argued over.)

d. Complex definitions, which combine, in various ways, elements of the other three types.” (With more elements involved, the greater the potential to reconstruct and alter the meaning of Jihad.)

4. Analyticity - This explains how “*all analysis is directional.*” Meaning that all analysis has a definite purpose and is steered and constructed according to what point the interlocutor is trying to make. Likewise one will construct the argument based on the tenets of the disciplinary approach they subscribe to. Thus all analysis is quasi logical in some ways. Using definitions or quantitative procedures also facilitate validation of their concepts.³⁶⁸ A particular reference needs to be made to the concept of philosophical analysis as it tends toward fundamental facts or towards sensory data.³⁶⁹ Again applying this to extremist narratives, the impression of analyzing facts that extremist narratives sometimes give is based on the use of ‘emotive facts’ that have the potential for a lot of emotive resonance which may also be empirically true. Extremists also steer their argument negating or putting down contradictory or alternate views points to establish their perspective. This gives the impression of having done a comprehensive analysis of facts. But we must also keep in mind that this can apply to even any type of mainstream academic discourse that inadvertently or otherwise does the same.

5. Rule of justice – This refers to the rational logic about fair and equal treatment, i.e. what applies to one should apply to the ‘other.’³⁷⁰ Many a time in extremist narratives, this may seem like blatant ‘*eye for an eye*’ rhetoric but one that is often rationalized on

³⁶⁸ Perelman & Tyteca 1969:214-218

³⁶⁹ *ibid*:215

³⁷⁰ *ibid*:218-220

the ideal of this 'Rule of Justice'. Perelman and Tyteca also explain how this "presupposes the partial identification of beings by putting them into a category and applying the treatment foreseen for members of that category."³⁷¹ For instance this may involve citing how those labelled as 'radicals' or 'extremists' expect to receive oppressive treatment and vilification even though it is contrary to any agreed upon and socially constructed 'rule of justice.' Extremist narratives similarly cite how a Westcentric 'Rule of Justice' is applied differentially or even negated when it comes to Muslims. Thus even though such statements might come across as rhetoric, they have a quasi-logical dimension based on this 'Rule of Justice' rhetorical method.

6. Reciprocity – This refers to the "Same treatment for 2 situations which are counterparts for each other".³⁷² This again requires a reductionist stance to simplify matters to enable such comparisons to have credence. Extremists might use this type of argument to say bombings that result in collateral damage to Muslim civilians by the principal of reciprocity require the same to be done to the civilians of the nation which perpetuated the attacks. In this case, the simplification of the argument negates any possibility that the attack was not intended or was an accident.

7. Transitivity – essentially the argumentation logic goes, if a = b and b = c, then a = c.³⁷³ To exemplify this, if a rule banning headscarves represents repression against Muslims, this might be equated to a unified worldwide war against Islam by the West. If elsewhere in the world derogatory cartoons are made about the Prophet Muhammad and

³⁷¹ *ibid*:219

³⁷² Perelman & Tyteca 1969:221

³⁷³ *ibid*:227

again equated to a worldwide war against Islam, then both situations might be deemed to be exactly similar in nature and extrapolated to mean that there is a global war on Islam waged by the West.

8. Inclusivity of the part in the whole – This quasi logical argument compares the whole with one of its parts. This is extended to the point that the parts are seen as representatives of the whole.³⁷⁴ Thus if repression of Muslims occurs in one Western state, then it may be seen by extremists as a representation of the attitude of the entire country or of Western nations in general. This is also similar to how extremists group might claim they represent all true Muslims.

9. Reducing whole to its parts - To understand the whole requires reducing the situation to the point of a dilemma.³⁷⁵ This shows the two alternatives as incompatible. Urgency of the situation is also stressed to *'exclude the possibility of pausing for thought: the debate is limited to the study that has been offered and to what might possibly be opposed to it immediately.'*³⁷⁶ For instance, the opposition to the building of a Mosque at 'ground zero' in New York is popularly portrayed by Islamaphobes to mean that it is a highly insensitive celebration of the terrorist's success. The terrorists are equated with Islam itself and an indication of the alarming, rampant and unchecked proliferation of Muslim presence in America. When drummed up by populist sentiment, it limits the debate to this narrow context without looking at the bigger picture. The entire issue here is reduced to this alarmist dilemma. Thus totally negating the possibility that the building of the

³⁷⁴ *ibid*:231-233

³⁷⁵ *ibid*:234

³⁷⁶ *ibid*:238-239

mosque can also be meant to demonstrate religious tolerance, that there is no ‘war on Islam’ and it is meant to show that people in the US are not giving in to the polarized vision of extremists. This alternate possibility and argument has no chance to mature in light of the alarmist dilemma and the narrow part that it has reduced the debate to.

10. Argumentation by comparison – again reduce issues to a level of comparison.³⁷⁷ The problem arises when the argument is made so simplistic that it negates all other mitigating factors that add balance to the argument.

11. Argumentation by sacrifice – This is where, “*the sacrifice is a measure of the value for which the sacrifice was made.*”³⁷⁸ For instance the argument for suicide bombing might focus on the reward that await martyrs in heaven or justice for the ummah (Global Community of Muslims) that will be achieved by their sacrifice which far outweighs the value of their lives. This applies to the relationship between ends and means.³⁷⁹ Thus in this case the argument is persuasive by the sheer weight of the sacrifice that is involved and the sympathy that this creates. By this argument, if someone is willing to make such a sacrifice, then the grievance behind this sacrifice must have some valid reasons.

12. Argumentation by probability – The ability to predict the shape of things to come based on precedence make for a strong argument. It is a kind of argument which acquires a “*special character when the evaluations are based both on the importance of the event*

³⁷⁷ Perelman & Tyteca 1969:241

³⁷⁸ *ibid*:248

³⁷⁹ *ibid*:252

and the probability of their occurrence.”³⁸⁰ Precedence which applies a series of prior arguments³⁸¹ has greater credibility. We see elements of reductionism again as Perelman and Tyteca cite how this “*entails reduction of the data – even if it is not a matter of quantifying them – to elements which seem more easily comparable.*”³⁸² Furthermore, having an empirical character to the problem makes the argument seem more valid.³⁸³ Frequently in extremist narratives, there is reference to historical precedence to explain the present state of things and where it is heading. For instance, extremist narratives may cite that the British colonial tactic of *divide et impera* (divide and conquer) used against Muslims in the past is replicated today in Iraq by the US strategy to divide and create mistrust among insurgent groups, thereby making it easier to subdue them. Then the narrative might extend this line of argument to predict that this is indicative of how the West intends to rule Muslims around the world and subdue them.

13. Arguments based on the structure of reality (causal link) - This refers to “*structures of reality to which they apply and which one can find in common usage.*”³⁸⁴ This can take the form of a causal link or a pragmatic argument. A causal link is one which attaches two given successive events to each other, shows the existence of a cause which could have determined a given event, or shows the resultant effect due to an event.³⁸⁵ An extension of this might involve extremist narratives using causal links that mainstream readers might not have considered previously.

³⁸⁰ *ibid*:255

³⁸¹ *ibid*:258

³⁸² *ibid*:259

³⁸³ *ibid*:260

³⁸⁴ Perelman & Tyteca 1969:262

³⁸⁵ *ibid*:263

14. Arguments based on the structure of reality (Pragmatic argument) – This is “*an evaluation of an act or an event, in terms of its favourable or unfavourable consequences.*”³⁸⁶ More often than not it relies on mere estimates³⁸⁷ and has a “*utilitarian common denominator.*”³⁸⁸ In extremist discourse, this argument can come in the form of portraying the negative consequences of not resisting the ‘oppressor.’ These consequences can then be pitched in a utilitarian form that resonates with the private needs and concerns of the individual.

15. Argumentation on the basis of ends and means - Perelman and Tyteca explain how “*...only ends stated in a general and vague manner remain invariant and universal and that the end is often made clear by examination of the means.*” Furthermore “*Some ends appear desirable because the means to realize them are created or become easily accessible*” and at times, “*means can become an end to be pursued for itself.*”³⁸⁹

Similarly, one might prefer to choose among values that justify such means. The means which are chosen can be ones that require the smallest sacrifice or which are seemingly more effective. This requires devaluing other means to present the means one favours as the only viable solution.³⁹⁰ At times, “*ineffectiveness of means often influences much more of the discussion of the ends than the technical problem of the best means.*”

³⁸⁶ *ibid*:266

³⁸⁷ *ibid*:268

³⁸⁸ *ibid*:270

³⁸⁹ *ibid*:275

³⁹⁰ *ibid*:276-277

Applying this to extremist claims, actions that tend to produce immediate visible results and in feelings of vindication resonate well with sympathizers. The alternative through political action and debate with their perceived ‘oppressors’ may not produce immediate gains and the results may also seem negligible to sympathizers. Whereas violent opposition escalating to terrorist acts create more visible impact and seem at least for the short term to gain the attention of their ‘oppressors’ and even get the results they want. The very fact that these attacks generate fear may suffice for extremists as a short term gain aimed at retribution.

There exists an agreement on ends which can help explain the nexus between activism that espouses extremist thought and terrorism. Both desire the same ends. (Liberation of Muslim lands, eliminating oppression, marginalization etc) But the mechanisms / means (demonstrations and other forms of activism vs. terrorist acts) to achieve these similar ends are different. As Marc Sageman rightfully put it,³⁹² the problem then becomes one where those in activist circles who find pacifist means ineffective, too slow or simply ‘empty talk’, turn to other means such as terrorism that seem to produce immediate results. Extremist narratives often make it a point to discuss how ineffective pacifist means of resistance are.

16. Argumentation of waste – emphasizes the wasted effort or sacrifice if a course of

³⁹¹ *ibid*:278

³⁹² Lecture delivered by Marc Sageman in RSIS, 6th November 2009,

action is not pursued. Therefore the means must be continued until the end is achieved.
³⁹³ It is interesting to note that the findings by the psychologists in the White Paper on the Jemmah Islamiah (JI) arrests cite how many of the members of JI felt they could not leave because they were, “...*in too deep*,” and they were too forgone to leave the organization.³⁹⁴ Similarly, extremists may feel they have invested too much on an ideal and turning back is not a viable option. It then becomes a case of making their sacrifice or effort worthwhile by meeting their objective or to die trying.

17. Argumentation of direction – This quasi logical rhetorical method aims to show where actions they are describing will eventually lead up to. Quite often for these kinds of arguments, the narrative will refer to precedent as evidence of the direction foreseen. If the precedent can be empirically provable, this will be used to support the argument.³⁹⁵ The rhetoric will also stress that when something is done it will stem this tide leading to this outcome. To exemplify this, for Islamaphobes, the presence of a Mosque at ground zero is indicative of the dangerously liberal direction towards Muslims by the present US government. This requires something to be done. This type of argument is also linked with the idea of unlimited development which is about the increase in value in continuing to pursue a certain direction of action.³⁹⁶ In the example cited, continuing to resist the building of the mosque may seem to Islamaphobes to increase the value of efforts done to stem the liberal accommodation of Muslims in the US.

³⁹³ Perelman & Tyteca 1969:279-281

³⁹⁴ White Paper on JI arrests, 16

³⁹⁵ Perelman & Tyteca 1969:282-283

³⁹⁶ Perelman & Tyteca 1969:287

18. Individual or group authority charisma and prestige can greatly facilitate the argument.³⁹⁷ The persuasive power of the argument is strengthened by the use of hyperboles and symbolic representation.³⁹⁸ Arguments based on authority often use the acts or opinions of a person or group of persons as proof to support their argument.³⁹⁹ For example, extremist narratives cite the prophet Muhammad and the Hadith as the prime source of validation. But if the prestige of the person or group of reference is gone, then the argument is diminished.⁴⁰⁰ Thus there is a tendency to focus the attack on the person and not argument in these cases. For instance focusing an attack on the character of a presidential candidate negates policies and viewpoints which may be unrelated to the person's character.

Furthermore the *“value of arguments will be gauged in terms of the value of the audience giving the credence.”*⁴⁰¹ Thus the opinion of critiques and professionals in the audience carry a lot of weight. This is also related to the idea of ‘essence’ where the relation or label attached to the rhetor is used as the starting point to frame an argument.⁴⁰² For example, the rhetor starts the argument from one's ascribed label as a freedom fighter, scientist or as the survivor of a holocaust. The surrounding experience or disciplinary background of the individual then greatly magnifies any points made by them.

³⁹⁷ *ibid*:305-310

³⁹⁸ *ibid*:290, 331-334

³⁹⁹ *ibid*:305

⁴⁰⁰ *ibid*:312

⁴⁰¹ *ibid*:321

⁴⁰² *ibid*:327

19. Argumentation by example and illustrations - This simplification of arguments by use of examples and illustrations to enhance their potency requires that the exemplification be convincing enough. The use of models, analogies and metaphors are all tools of this argumentation technique.⁴⁰³

Based on all the above Quasi –Logical argumentation methods described, a common theme seen in the use of rhetorics and their quasi logical permutations is simplification or reductionism. But this does not mean that it is a form of argumentation that is most effective with those who do not think critically. On the contrary, the simplicity of the argument is at times its greatest strength. It is an argument that will be hard to refute unless an equally fundamental counter argument is given. It therefore stands to reason that quasi- logical arguments (quasi-logics) derive their strength from complex situations being reduced to elemental forms where rational and logical arguments become more visible and evident.

This is an important line of reasoning towards the study of the ‘logical structure.’ While it may seem that extremists follow a rationality that is unique to their social context and individual psychology, this is not what the logical structure represents. Instead it is argued that the kind of rationality that is subscribed to⁴⁰⁴ is applicable to any ‘reasonable’ / rational individual.⁴⁰⁵ Again there is a need to make the vital caveat that

⁴⁰³ *ibid*:350-398

⁴⁰⁴ Either through reductionist quasi logical arguments or in complex arguments that are rationally constructed with little use of the other forms of argumentation.

⁴⁰⁵ “The Reasonable man” test a Legal Maxim. “*This serves as a comparative standard for determining liability. For example, the decision whether an accused is guilty of a given offense might involve the*

this does not mean that their arguments are right. Far from it, it is yet another indication of how the worst of crimes such as genocide can be framed in very rational arguments that can appeal to anyone. Many prominent cases have shown how extremist narratives appeal to even professionals and educated individuals with seemingly rational mindsets and relatively stable lives. There are many examples in this century of educated individuals who are commonly assumed to be more discerning, turning to extremist thinking. Many such educated individuals more often than not reside in the upper echelons of the terrorist / extremist organization.⁴⁰⁶ Only when we begin to understand the nature of how the ‘logical structure’ is an inherent component of extremist thinking, can we produce effective counter-narratives to extremist discourse – especially to those at the leadership levels in such an organisation. Once the leadership moves away from such thinking, the effect is very likely to be felt with the followers and sympathizers.⁴⁰⁷

Poetics

Aristotle’s idea of poetics saw argumentation as a species of imitation that

application of an objective test in which the conduct of the accused is compared to that of a reasonable person under similar circumstances”, cited in “Reasonable Man Theory Law & Legal Definition,” Legal Definitions Legal Terms Dictionary, <http://definitions.uslegal.com/r/reasonable-man-theory/> (accessed August 26, 2011).

⁴⁰⁶ Hoffman, Bruce, “Today’s Highly Educated Terrorists”, 15 Sept 2010, p2 “*Indeed, an inevitable bifurcation generally occurs across all terrorist movements whereby the top leadership and mid-level command strata are populated by the educated (or relatively well-educated) and financially well-off, while the majority of foot soldiers will be less educated and often from far more modest socio-economic backgrounds. A rule of thumb is thus that the larger the movement, the more diverse its members’ socio-economic and educational backgrounds*”, cited in Bruce Hoffman, "Today's Highly Educated Terrorists | The National Interest Blog." The National Interest. <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/bruce-hoffman/todays-highly-educated-terrorists-4080?page=2> (accessed August 26, 2011).

⁴⁰⁷ See Ashour 2009, 138 described in Chapter 9, pg. 364-365 of this study.

employed various modes, mediums and referred to varying objects. One key component of this would be the ‘tragedy.’ Aristotle described tragedy as an imitation of action and life which has an emotional attraction of its own.⁴⁰⁸

Aristotle also described another facet of poetic discourse. This is the idea of an ‘epic’. He explained how, “*Again, epic poetry must have as many kinds as tragedy: it must be simple, or complex, or 'ethical,' or 'pathetic'. The parts also, with the exception of song and spectacle, are the same; for it requires reversals, recognitions, and scenes of suffering.*”⁴⁰⁹

From Aristotle’s description, we can surmise a number of key components of tragedy and epic as it is employed in extremist Muslim narratives. One, when emotive content or words are used in extremist narratives, they often refer to the tragedy of Muslims and their plight as a result of oppression and injustice. Extremist literature also exploits Quranic prose. The sheer poetic strength of Quranic narratives is used to culminate accounts of Muslim ‘tragedies.’ Many a time Jihadi *Nasheeds* or religious songs with the corresponding video content are highly emotive. The way the extremist websites portray their struggle has epic proportions.

⁴⁰⁸ Aristotle's Poetics, adapted from the translation by S.H. Butcher, "Aristotle's Poetics." University of Leeds, School of Humanities: Classics - Faculty of Arts - University of Leeds, (London 1907), http://search.leeds.ac.uk/search?q=cache:JunoTJW_CfwJ:www.leeds.ac.uk/classics/resources/poetics/poettr an.htm+poetics&output=xml_no_dtd&ie=UTF-8&client=corporate&proxystylesheet=corporate&site=default_collection&access=p&oe=ISO-8859-1 (accessed August 26, 2011).

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

For instance the narrative could be about the long suffering saga of a band of resistance fighters, whose ethical strength which stems from their devotion to Islam, fighting against a militarily far superior enemy. This notion may be portrayed in the scenes of attacks against American forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, with accompanying *Nasheeds*. This narrative may also highlight how the struggle goes on, thus taking on the qualities of an epic as described by Aristotle.

The scenes of smiling suicide bombers as they record their last moments and narratives of their last will prior to an attack is again intended to demonstrate the courage and strength of the character of the *Mujahedeen* (Holy warrior) and the promise of final victory behind the poignant tragedy. The recording of the dramatic explosive action of their final moments is meant to visually emphasise this. The ‘end’ is tragic but glorious with the element of hope that comes with resistance. None of this can be accomplished without ‘spectacular effects’ that the video, song, imagery or narrative is able to provide. The entire account is in many ways a poetic ‘imitation’ as one would naturally not know the real dynamics and feelings of the suicide bomber in this case.

Dialectics

Dialectics originate from the Greek expression for the art of conversation. The word has been used in various contexts and some of them are as follows:

- i. “*The Hegelian and Marxist notion of the dialectic as a historical process.*”

- ii. *Method of refutation by examining logical consequences.*
- iii. *Sophistical reasoning. **
- iv. *Method of division or repeated logical analysis of genera into species.*
- v. *An investigation of the supremely general abstract notions by some process of reasoning leading up to them from particular cases or hypostudy.*
- vi. *Logical reasoning or debate using premises that are merely probable or generally accepted.*
- vii. *Formal logic.*
- viii. *The criticism of the logic of illusion, showing the contradiction into which reason falls in trying to go beyond experiences to deal with transcendental objects*
- ix. *The logical development of thought or reality through study and antistudy to a synstudy of these opposites. ”⁴¹⁰*

Aristotle saw dialectics as the “*refutation of the hypostudy of opponents by drawing unacceptable consequences from those hypotheses.*”⁴¹¹ Zeno similarly had used ‘*indirect logical arguments to defeat an opponent.*’⁴¹²

In this research a dialectical argument in an extremist narrative aims to do the same thing. Similar to how sophist Protagoras claimed that dialectics could “*make the worse argument appear the better.*”⁴¹³ This relegates dialectics to the role of a rhetorical tactic. This tactic is simply to criticize the logic of the opponent, rather than to address

⁴¹⁰ Paul Edwards, *The Encyclopedia of philosophy*, New York: Macmillan, 1967, 385-386

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 386

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

⁴¹³ Edwards 1967, 386

the criticisms directed at the rhetor. To Socrates, dialectical arguments involved a search for truth by question and answer that involves guiding the “*opponent onto a generalization by getting him to accept the truth of a series of propositions about particular cases.*” This is the principal behind the Socratic method in which “*dialectics is the process of eliciting the truth by means of questions aimed at opening out what is already implicitly known, or at exposing the contradictions and muddles of an opponent’s position.*”⁴¹⁴ However, the latter part of the Socratic method can be quite confrontational and this is a common characteristic of any extremist narrative. But in our context this should not be confused with the idea of Socratic Irony in which the rhetor puts on a pretense of not knowing and giving guiding questions to lead the student to the answer.⁴¹⁵ Dialectics when used in extremist narrative does not have such a benign intent. But rather as a tactic that diminishes the effect of a criticism or condemnable action by questioning the opponent or by highlighting his flaws instead.

Sophism:

Plato saw sophists as charlatans.⁴¹⁶ He saw them as, “*superficial, destructive, and at worst deceivers, purveyors of sophistry in the modern sense of the term.*”⁴¹⁷ Teaching “*...the art of fallacious discourse...*” in which it was Socrates who, “*exposed the*

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 99

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 386

⁴¹⁶ Simon Blackburn, *The Oxford dictionary of philosophy*, 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 2005, 345.

⁴¹⁷ Guthrie, W. K. C., *The Sophists*, (London: Cambridge University Press), 1971,10.

hollowness of their rhetoric...”⁴¹⁸. When Protagoras of Abdera cited how the skill of sophistry can “*make the weaker argument the stronger*”, Aristophanes, “*satirized Protagoras as one who would make unjust arguments defeat just arguments.*”⁴¹⁹ This is a far more serious criticism that portrayed sophists as unethical and material exploiters of those upright individuals lacking in such skill. Extremist narratives are seen in this way whenever they are described as being misleading but persuasive in their style of arguments to the point of ‘brainwashing’. This is almost akin to what Morgan advocates when he compares terrorist groups like al-Qaeda to a religio-political- apocalyptic cult.⁴²⁰ This naturally takes away their political legitimacy as their arguments are now seen as behavioral manipulation with no rational basis.

The logic behind sophistry in its benevolent sense is exemplified by Protagoras in stating that there is no objective truth, the world is for each person as it appears to that person and that skilled people can thus change other’s perceptions in useful ways.⁴²¹

Although the pejorative label has been criticised by proponents for the true ideals of sophistry, in this research we use this form of argumentation as intended by Plato; namely how extremist narratives persuade audiences through the clever use of distorted facts, accounts of events that negate or simply leave out mitigating or alternate

⁴¹⁸ *ibid*:11-12

⁴¹⁹ Robert Audi, *The Cambridge dictionary of philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1995, 863

⁴²⁰ “...*Al Qaeda represents a hybrid of these different forms of cults, which like all of them all is based on brainwashing, mind-control and behavioral manipulation of their members*”, Quoted in Stephen J. Morgan, "Al Qaeda : Secrets of its Hidden Power", *YoursDaily.com*, www.yoursdaily.com/different_views/al_qaeda_secrets_of_its_hidden_power (accessed August 28, 2011).

⁴²¹ Audi, 863

perspectives and / or through the use of misleading arguments.

Rationalism

This constitutes the essence of what this research is referring to as the logical structure. Rationalism refers to any “*philosophy magnifying the role played by unaided reason, in the acquisition and justification of knowledge. The preference for reason over sense experience as a source of knowledge....*”⁴²² One of the key components of a persuasive argument involves the presence of “*logical reasoning and evidence in support of a claim.*”⁴²³ A rational argument might also have the following demarcators:

- 1) Inductive reasoning. This entails making inferences based on observed or specific evidence. The Toulmin model uses the legal precept of proving beyond reasonable doubt but not having to prove it to absolute terms. One of the components of Toulmin’s logical argument involves the ability to allow for rebuttals and exceptions to the claim without having to invalidate it.⁴²⁴ This is important as at times a counter –extremist narrative may fail not because it is not rational but because it does not factor well enough for rationally constructed rebuttals. Extremist narratives on the other hand have made it a point to directly factor

⁴²² Blackburn 2005, 308

⁴²³ "WCU - Spring 2002 Understanding Rational Argument", *Brainstorm Communication Services*, <http://brainstorm-services.com/wcu-2002/argument-rational.html> (accessed November 2, 2011).

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

common criticisms being used against it.⁴²⁵

The Aristotelian Model uses ‘syllogisms’ which entail the use of major and minor premises. The major premise has specific evidence to corroborate and the minor premise constitutes an assumption.⁴²⁶ For instance, in an extremist narrative, it might point to an instance when some Muslim men with beards were singled out for detailed searches and questioning before boarding an aircraft. This might be taken together with the assumption that all ‘Muslims’ are subject to discrimination after 9/11. The inferred conclusion might be there is now an institutionalized procedure at the airport that discriminates against Muslim men.

- 2) Deductive reasoning. This entails the use of a major premise that is assumed to be a true statement and a minor premise which can be a specific observation. The conclusion is then derived from the synthesis of these two premises.⁴²⁷ For instance, the major premise might be many individuals originating from Yemen with no carryon luggage have turned out to be terrorists. The minor premise or specific observation might be, Abdul happens to be a Yemeni with no carry on luggage and also originates from Yemen. The deduced conclusion is that Abdul is likely to be a terrorist. But we can naturally see where such deductive rational for arguments can go wrong, but it nonetheless helps to create a persuasive rational argument.

⁴²⁵ This will be further illustrated in chapter 8, pg. 318.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

3) A rational argument can also have elements of instrumental rationality (rational arguments or actions that are done in pursuance of a specific objective) or even epistemic rationality. (supported by evidence) ⁴²⁸ Epistemically rational arguments, when corroborated by empirical observations and facts make for a very convincing rational argument that is not easily dismissed. Instrumentally rational arguments create in the mind of the reader the utilitarian logic behind it. For instance, an extremist narrative might be trying to convince potential suicide bombers who question whether their actions will actually make a difference. The instrumental argument or actions to address this might be ones that demonstrate the destructive potential and realizable results of such actions.

A final point to note is that just because an argument is rationally constructed does not necessarily mean that it is correct. The key point being made here is that despite this, the existence of rational components in a narrative contributes greatly to its persuasive appeal.

⁴²⁸ “By epistemic rationality, I mean, roughly, the kind of rationality which one displays when one believes propositions that are strongly supported by one’s evidence and refrains from believing propositions that are improbable given one’s evidence...By instrumental rationality, I mean the rationality which one displays in taking the means to one’s ends. Thus, if I have the goal of asking the speaker a question, and I know that I will only be able to ask the speaker a question if I raise my hand, then (all else being equal) it is instrumentally rational for me to raise my hand.” See Thomas Kelly, “Epistemic Rationality as Instrumental Rationality: A Critique”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXVI, no. 3 (2003), University of Notre Dame, <http://www.princeton.edu/~tkelly/papers/epistemicasinstrumental.pdf> (accessed August 26, 2011), 1.

Ideal Speech Situation vs Philosophical argumentation logics

If the theory of communicative action and concealed strategic action were juxtaposed with the five philosophical argumentation logics, we might get the following convergences:

1. A truly rational argument would fall under communicative action. This is because when there is disagreement; a rational discourse ensues to validate the truth of the argument.⁴²⁹
2. Sophistic arguments come under concealed strategic action. This is by virtue of the position that they aim to mislead or lead the argument for the prime reason of achieving the instrumental goal of the narrator and not for seeking the ‘correct’ or mutually reasonable answer.
3. Poetic arguments are somewhat similar to the “expressive speech” of Habermas which relates to the communication of ‘feelings’ and the impression that this feeling expressed is true and sincere.⁴³⁰ This is especially the case in the narration of tragedies in extremist Muslim narratives. As in the case of the suicide bomber described in this chapter, such arguments leverage on emotions to create the impres-

⁴²⁹ “...When the offer made by the speaker fails to receive uptake, speaker and hearer may shift reflexive levels, from ordinary speech to “discourse”—processes of argumentation and dialogue in which the claims implicit in the speech act are tested for their rational justifiability as true, correct or authentic. Thus the rationality of communicative action is tied to the rationality of discourse...” see “Jurgen Habermas (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy/Winter 2010 Edition)”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/habermas/> (accessed December 15, 2011).

⁴³⁰ “...in “expressive” speech acts the speaker claims truthfulness or sincerity for the way in which he or she reveals an experience or feeling to an audience...To understand an expressive speech act is to know the conditions under which a person can have the feeling expressed (or perhaps better to know what that feeling is), and to know the conditions under which the person can said to have spoken his or her ‘real feelings’...”, see Baxter 1987, 44

sion that the suicide bomber is feeling happy and at peace as they achieve martyrdom. A poetic argument based on the utilization of emotions and emotively resonating ideas such as ‘tragedy’ may not exist in the realm of true communicative action. This is due to the strategic basis underlying it, namely to persuade the audience that the feeling expressed is true and perhaps stemming from this any account of events and issues associated with it.

4. At the dialectical level according to Habermas, the argument has to meet the required burden of proof.⁴³¹ The dialectical tactic of responding to a challenge by addressing the flaw in the position of the opponent instead of answering the criticism is in line with this understanding. This is because a more logical argument should be able to withstand the scrutiny and critical discussion expected in a “*ritualized competition for better arguments*.”⁴³²
5. If rhetorical arguments are seen as a speech tactic, then it is not the more rational argument that wins but the more convincing one that employs rhetorical strategies. These too will fall under concealed strategic action if such argumentation tactics are used for purely instrumental ends. A rhetorical agreement is in many ways made to suit the temperaments of the audience that it is directed at. For instance, a rhetorical argument about moral rightness will be accepted if it is in line with the history and tradition of values of the audience.⁴³³

Examining the Habermasian idea of communicative action and concealed

⁴³¹ Bohman, James and Rehg, William, "Jürgen Habermas", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/habermas/>>.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

strategic action and juxtaposing this against the five philosophical argumentation logics described, reveal the following possibilities regarding extremist narratives:

1. People gravitate towards the internet chat rooms and are taken in with the ‘nonsense’, ‘in your face’ literature primarily because this creates the impression that an ideal speech situation exists there. The audience might feel that discourse and narratives over the internet are more likely to be true and reflective of reality when it is not weighed down by political coercion. Relative anonymity on the internet also facilitates this perceived impression.
2. The idea of an “ideal speech situation” is again reinforced by the creative use of these argumentation logics. One might develop the impression that you can say whatever you want on the internet and more or less get away with it. Take for instance the dialectical argumentative approach used by extremist activist groups like the “*Hizb Ut Tahrir*” that advocates a philosophy of “*never defend, always offend.*”⁴³⁴ This has the potential to instill a feeling of empowerment that comes from being the person asking the questions and who is able to put the inquisitor on the defensive. This is common in extremist Muslim narratives over the internet. An individual might find this kind of empowerment especially appealing if in reality they are not able to freely question anything or anyone. It is exacerbated if they have in reality been historically always on the defensive.

⁴³⁴ Ed Husain, *The Islamist*, (England: Penguin Books), 2007, 100.

3. For any credible counter-narrative, there is a need to counter the cult of personality or mystique built around prominent extremist ideologues and leaders. Such personalities do not have to do much to promote themselves due to the proliferation of stories and incidents about corruption and abuse of power by the ruling government in question. When such narratives circulate and become visible, this creates a natural allure to personalities that claim to be the antistudy of such characters. Destroying the appeal of such personalities becomes harder when the sheer lack of visibility of such alternate perspectives creates a myth of conspiracy. Such personalities then simply have to align their rhetorical arguments to leverage on this overall impression. Furthermore, because such perspectives are less publicized and so shockingly different, readers might feel they are more likely to be true. The repeated emphasis on extremist forums on how untrustworthy mainstream media is a testament to this. This is the end product of having a situation where free and open discourse that embodies true communicative action is lacking. Therefore suppression of critique in any issue has the capacity to promote a counter-culture value system that feels that the body politic is out to suppress alternate and differing views because it threatens their power base. Any counter-argument by the state will then lack credibility as rhetorical arguments have already leveraged on such impressions.

4. Even if you were to remove the power based barriers to open communication, this will not be enough to have a state of true communicative action in which rational arguments prevail. Strategic action that manifests in self-interest based speech

tactics might still dominate in a contest of arguments even if such power barriers were to be removed. Thus the most rational and true argument existing in the most unconstrained communicative environment may not always prevail. But we also need to ask whether there exists a “universal” audience to give consensus to any argument in the first place. A heavily rhetorical argument may not resonate with an audience that gravitates to logical or rational elements and vice versa. Non-rational arguments such rhetorical, dialectical, sophist and poetic can still dominate over rational arguments in an ideal speech situation as there will be those who prefer strategic action based communication for reasons of self – interest.

A demonstration to address critiques to the logical structure hypothesis

Notions of extremist narratives having a logical structure to their argument will undoubtedly raise criticism in the following areas. One would entail the presence of rhetorical characteristics in extremist narratives. This would lead one to question if extremist narratives are in essence superficial, non intellectual portrayal of events. The absence of strong and carefully considered deliberations can also question the objectivity of such narratives. Furthermore extremist narratives that focus on universal values can be critiqued on the basis that they do not take into account social context. In summary even though the presence of epistemic logic in these narratives can be proven, they may be deemed as being essentially superficial, simplistic and emotive.

To properly address such critique we first need to keep in mind what a ‘logical’

statement would entail. At its very core, this would be one in which the premise (why the statement is true) of the argument would support the conclusion.⁴³⁵ An argument can be valid, weak or strong. In a valid argument, the premise is true in all cases but the conclusion can still differ. Thus the distinction between strong and weak arguments is a matter of degree. There are no formal principals of logic for non-deductively strong arguments that clearly demarcates when the premise provides sufficient evidence to justify the conclusion. This is determined by conventional choice.^{436 437} If we were to apply these same principals to extremist narratives, then the extent to which the statement is logical becomes a matter of degree as well.

At this stage we need to keep in mind how Aristotle took rhetoric as a skill. The effective argument is seen as one that is strong in the three *species of proofs*, namely the *ethos* (credibility of speaker), *pathos* (the appeal of emotions) and finally *logos*. (the appeal of logic and reasons) Therefore an argument low on *logos* but rated high on the other two species of proof is likely to be persuasive. But having said this, we need to understand that what is being demonstrated in this research are ‘snapshots’ of an entire narrative. Quite naturally there will be ebbs and flows as to when *logos* peaks. It will be shown in the example that follows how the culmination of many such ‘snapshots’ of *logos* result in creating an end result that is logically persuasive in totality but weak if analysed in terms of only one of its individual component narratives.

⁴³⁵ "Logical Arguments", *Philosophy Pages*, <http://www.philosophypages.com/lg/e01.htm> (accessed May 25, 2012).

⁴³⁶ "UI Critical Thinking Handbook: Chapter Six -- Theory", *University of Idaho*, http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/crit_think/Chapter-Six-1.htm (accessed May 26, 2012).

⁴³⁷ "What is a "STRONG" argument?" *criticalthinkeracademy*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXMAR63TVDI&feature=related> (accessed May 26, 2012).

Furthermore a logical structure would exist in varying degrees and interspersed among the wide variety of extremist narratives, some of which would naturally be more rhetorical than logical. But this does not negate the presence of *logos* rich narratives. What is more important is that in any persuasive argument, the *logos* within the argument will not be able to create the necessary effect if it is not given the time to develop the case. But time is a luxury in internet discourse. To capture the attention of the prospective audience, *ethos* and *pathos* are necessary to create the necessary attention grabbing appeal to get the reader to want to know more. It is at this stage that the culminative effective of multiple points of *logos* can secure the argument.

It is also necessary to keep in mind the effect of quasi-logical arguments. A quasi-logical argument need not be a pure rhetorical fallacy. It also does not mean the argument is necessarily invalid or devoid of cogent reasoning. The strength of quasi-logical arguments lies in their ability to give the impression of approximating or actually approximating formal reasoning or empirical proof to appear convincing. But upon scrutiny it is realised that they appear so only when the arguments are reduced or simplified to an informal level that makes them seem demonstrative of reality.⁴³⁸ (Syllogisms and Analogical reasoning) This reduction or simplification of the argument gives them credibility.

⁴³⁸ Randy Harris, "Cognitive Dimensions of the Universal Audience", *Linguistics, Rhetoric, and Communication Design, Department of English, University of Waterloo*, www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/~raha/cv/Harris-CognitiveDimensionsOfUA.pdf (accessed May 27, 2012).

Based on all the quasi-logical argumentation methods described previously in this chapter, a common theme seen in the use of rhetorics and their quasi-logical permutations is simplification or reductionism. But this does not mean that it is a form of argumentation that is most effective with those who do not think critically. On the contrary, the simplicity of the argument is at times its greatest strength. It is an argument that will be hard to refute unless an equally fundamental counter argument is given. It therefore stands to reason that quasi- logical arguments (quasi-logics) derive their strength from complex situations being reduced to elemental forms where rational and logical arguments become more visible and evident. Finally as described earlier we need to keep in mind the culminative effect of many occurrences of quasi-logical arguments. Given the sheer volume of the number of extremist narratives available in cyberspace, the culminative effect of quasi-logical arguments and interspersed occurrences of *logos* (both weak and strong) is not something that can be dismissed easily.

Another point of consideration for assessing the logical weight in extremist narratives has to do with *causality* as compared to *correlation*. While there might be a '*slippery slope*' rhetorical fallacy in jumping from the initial premise to a far-fetched conclusion, it nonetheless does not mean that *correlations* do not exist. For example one might say increasing cases of violence inflicted on particularly Muslims can possibly correlate with a growing number of organised groups that promote Islamaphobia. But to draw the causality as extremists do, to a state sanctioned conspiracy to declare war on Islam is stretching the argument too far. Extremist narratives often fall into this *slippery slope* rhetorical fallacy of associating causality that jumps a number of steps to reach farfetched

conclusions or to propose extremist solutions. Having said this, the logical correlation between violence and the number of growing anti-Muslim hate propaganda is again something one cannot dismiss either.

Not always are decisions made on the basis of pure logic either. Analytical thinkers apply their analytical thinking to concepts that were actually derived from intuitive thinking. The latter's foundation is set by the belief system of the society and state.⁴³⁹ As such we can have cases where a person's cultural nuances, upbringing and moral persuasions instil an intuitive mode of analysis that will override any coldly logical arguments. Simply put, just because it is logical does not entail that the action is morally right. This can be one reason why someone may not subscribe to the argument no matter how logical it will appear to be as one's intuitive analysis tells him or her otherwise. We must not make light of intuitive thinking as it exists in the realm of knowledge based on consciousness, common sense and mathematical axioms and is a component of logical thinking. Campbell describes how *"Logical truth consisteth (sic) in the conformity of our conception to their archetypes in the nature of things. This conformity is perceived by the mind, either immediately on a bare attention to the ideas under review, or mediately (sic) by a comparison of these with other related ideas. Evidence of the former kind is called intuitive; of the latter deductive."*⁴⁴⁰ Furthermore, first principals on any subject are often intuitive creations and there are situations in which the conclusions are correct but cannot be validated by formal reasoning. Campbell explains this by quoting how,

⁴³⁹ Will M. Gervais and Ara Norenzayan, "Analytic Thinking Promotes Religious Disbelief", *Science* 336, no. 6080 (2012), 493-496.

⁴⁴⁰ George Campbell, "Chapter 5, Of the different sources of evidence, and the different subjects to which they are respectively adapted", In *The philosophy of rhetoric*, Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004, 57.

All reasoning necessarily supposes that there are certain principals in which we must acquiesce, and beyond which we cannot go; principals clearly discernible by their own light, which can derive no additional evidence from anything besides. On the contrary supposition, the investigation of truth would be an endless and a fruitless task; we should be eternally proving, while nothing could ever be proved; because, by the hypothesis, we could never ascend to premises which require no proof. ⁴⁴¹

Another critique to the rational nature of extremist narratives is that they are deemed to often present arguments that seem typical of conspiracy theories. While the conspiracy narrative can be based on epistemic rationality and involve elements of deductive and inductive analytical thinking, labelling an argument as a conspiracy instantly kills its credibility. While this might be the case, it must be recognised that this can sometime result in creating a '*straw man*' rhetorical fallacy. Not addressing elements of logical arguments in a conspiracy narrative creates the propensity for the unanswered questions to go viral. So instead of defeating the conspiracy argument by rationally arguing each point, one might simply give a distorted / exaggerated version of the actual argument. In this case the narrative is labelled as a conspiracy theory without giving the points in the argument due consideration. This like a '*straw man*' makes the argument easy to defeat.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 64

This wilful refusal to engage in genuine argumentation thus creates a ‘straw man’ rhetorical fallacy.

With regards to the issue of proper deliberation of arguments, it will be demonstrated via the argumentation cluster theme in the findings chapter that extremist narratives in fact thrive on quoting and directly addressing the criticisms against them.⁴⁴²

Finally the aim of this thesis is *not* to show that terrorist discourse is scholarly. The two (logical reasoning and scholarly works) are not necessarily the same. They just have to make sense to the ‘reasonable man’. The point being made here is that it is not only the presence of epistemic rationality that makes an argument logical but also because of the analytical thought processes involved. The other two ingredients of logical thought go past the instrumental. These are of course referring to deductive (analogical) / inductive reasoning, with corroboration (epistemic rationality) that would appeal to a universal audience.

The question that naturally arises is whether such an argument is acceptable to a ‘reasonable’ man. More importantly, what is a ‘reasonable man’? Courts of law apply the ‘reasonable man test’ to ascertain what someone who is rational would do under the same circumstances. This would require us to examine the idea of what is a rational person.

⁴⁴² See theme entitled, “*We know what you are saying about us and this is what we say to that*” in chapter 8.

Using a typical dictionary definition of the word '*rational*'⁴⁴³ tells us the following. One, it involves the use of one's intellect and reasoning to analyse a problem. Two, the individual has full control of his senses and intellectual faculties and as such is deemed sane. Three, the individual is not overly driven to the decisions in question on the basis of emotive judgments and in that vein, personal bias. Therefore the elements of a rational / reasonable person would entail – reasoning, sanity and absence or minimal emotive influence.

There is another component of rationality that is predicated sociologically by the society one is brought up in. Merton describes how one conforms to the norms and values of one place in society. Conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion are modes of adaptation that one uses to cope with any resentments or dissatisfaction.⁴⁴⁴ If we amalgamate the legal maxim of the 'reasonable man' with textbook definitions of

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"rational

1. *using reason or logic in thinking out a problem*
 2. *in accordance with the principles of logic or reason; reasonable*
 3. *of sound mind; sane the patient seemed quite rational*
 4. *endowed with the capacity to reason; capable of logical thought man is a rational being*
- Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003*

Rational - having its source in or being guided by the intellect (as distinguished from experience or emotion); "a rational analysis"

Based on WordNet 3.0, Farlex clipart collection. © 2003-2012 Princeton University, Farlex Inc.

Rational

- 1 *able to think, reason and judge etc Man is a rational animal.*
 - 2 *sensible; reasonable; logical; not (over-) influenced by emotions etc There must be a rational explanation for those strange noises*
- Kernerman English Multilingual Dictionary © 2006-2010 K Dictionaries Ltd."*

The above dictionary definitions are taken from - "rational - definition of rational by the Free Online Dictionary, Thesaurus and Encyclopedia", *Dictionary, Encyclopedia and Thesaurus - The Free Dictionary*, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/rational> (accessed May 21, 2012).

⁴⁴⁴ "The Anomie Tradition", *Deviance & Social Control: Online Review*, http://deviance.socprobs.net/Unit_3/Theory/Anomie.htm (accessed May 26, 2012).

what is deemed rational together with Merton's modes of adaptation, we get a clearer picture of what constitutes a reasonable person. Going by this amalgamated definition, the modes of adaptation of innovation, retreatism and rebellion would not be deemed rational by the society in question as it goes against mainstream norms and values. The state might naturally play a major role in establishing such norms and values. On the other hand, conformity and ritualism as a mode of adaptation might have greater acceptance with the state. With the exception of those who have pathological problems that diminish their lucidity and those whose actions are determined by emotive considerations, then all other actions that involve some form of reasoned judgment would be rational. One can of course be faulted by the basis of one's reasoning. But one can also be faulted even if the reasoning is sound but goes against established norms and values.

If we accept the idea of 'universal values' that conform with accepted ideas of morality and decency, then the judgment of a reasonable man that is universally accepted would be predicated on a universal set of moral values and lucid reasoning. This is also why the great majority of Muslims worldwide do not ascribe to extremist solutions. Simply put, while they may agree to the ideas put across by a reasoned argument in an extremist narrative, universal morality makes one question the end states suggested. Many might also find the overall argument as flawed after considering other factors despite the sound logic existing in components of an extremist argument.

As such, a reasonable person is more likely to not accept an extremist narrative on the basis of morality, social and instrumental considerations and a rational decision that

does not agree with the final end states proposed despite having logic in components of the argument. The persuasive appeal of extremist narratives is contingent on a few other characteristics.

Booth in his examination of fundamentalist conversion narratives identified several key characteristics that define it and adds to its persuasive effect. He described how fundamentalist narratives predominantly base themselves on "stories" that describe how the protagonist makes an epic journey, which transcends everyday reality to reach a "promised" land. It may be a journey more in the spiritual than physical sense. But either way, it is a journey fraught with perils, trials and tribulations in which the protagonist is seen to falter and at times almost succumb to temptations or physical hardship. Eventually the protagonist makes "sacrifices" that can manifest in a number of forms. Some of these "sacrifices" can be very personal and can include the giving up of a life of sin or some worldly material pleasure for the ultimate reward that awaits one for taking the path that the fundamentalist narrative is seeking propagate. The "story" is important as it has the capacity to immerse the listener into the world of the "hero" in the narrative. Here the listeners dwells in the story and in some ways escapes the real world to a different world with a *"different time scheme and ordering of values."* It thus allows the listener to transcend to a world that becomes more real than the one he or she is presently residing in.⁴⁴⁵

One of these variables that characterize a fundamentalist narrative is what Booth

⁴⁴⁵ Wayne C. Booth, "The Rhetoric of Fundamentalist Conversion Narratives," in *Fundamentalisms comprehended*, ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 386.

calls the *"Instrument of Conversion and Resulting Pace."* This can encompass two situations. In the first one, the convert is party to that critical moment in a journey or process in which one has an awakening brought on by a moment of epiphany or through the meeting of someone who plays the part of the divine messenger or inspirational character.⁴⁴⁶

For the second situation, Booth makes reference to Douglas Hyde who 'converted' from Communism to becoming a Catholic. He describes how it was *"a transformation that occurred gradually as Hyde discerned logical contradictions in the Communist position and in his own way of adhering to it. The turning point for Hyde came when he was asked to debate with Catholics and realized that in order to do well in the debate he must carefully read the best Catholic list he could obtain. 'That was my undoing as a Commie,' he reports. 'As I prepared my defence, the weakness in my own position was gradually revealed.' "*⁴⁴⁷

This is a critical point as it reveals how an individual's values and beliefs based on a culturally established narrative, either by one's prior religious beliefs or ideas propagated by the state, lose their holding potential if it gets weakened in a logical discourse or analysis. It need not be a case where the narrative is logically weaker in reality. The damage seeps in when the established narrative that is propagated is lacking in the elements that would make it more persuasive in a logical discourse. It is also damaging when the established narrative does not credibly counter or does not counter at

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 373

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

all, the logic presented by the opposing narrative.

An essential component of fundamentalist narratives is the idea of who the enemy is. Booth states that, "*part of the bliss offered is total clarity of who the enemies are.*"⁴⁴⁸ This would naturally lead to a polarised view of the world in which the fundamentalist is awaiting patiently for a millennial end in which the final battle will give victory to the faithful. But until then, they have to combat all the enemies of the faith.⁴⁴⁹

A classic example of how what has been described works is seen in the narratives given by and about Syed Qutb. It has all the characteristics of a good fundamentalist "story" in which the protagonist (Qutb) starts out as a person brought up with Islamic virtues. But along the way he initially gets enchanted with Western values and lifestyles. He then experienced a transformation when he saw in America the negative aspects of Western culture and life for what it is. As such, he made the ultimate sacrifice of giving up pleasures that such a life offered to the point he was willing to be tortured in a horrific manner for his beliefs in the prisons of Nasser. But ultimate victory was his as he never succumbed to such enormous pressures and was steadfast in his beliefs about justice as offered by Islam. His reward came in the form of martyrdom.⁴⁵⁰

A more contemporary version of this narrative seen in extremist Muslim website literature would be how the young radical born in Western / secular society led a life of sin only to discover later on through a series of life events or by meeting the "significant

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 381

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 388-391.

other", the true path in the form of Jihad offered by the extremist narrative. But it will be a journey that is fraught with danger and the ever-present threat of detection. The young radical despite all objections and lack of support given by his family is willing to give up the comforts of material life, leave his loved ones and take the perilous journey that will bring him to a fight that may end his life but assure ultimate martyrdom if he stays true to the course. We can see how this narrative parallels Qutb's life narrative as it is told by his supporters and how the contemporary extremist Muslim narrative is meant to emphasise the idea of the 'journey' to the 'true' path. It is sometimes the compelling nature of such experiential accounts that adds to the persuasive appeal in the extremist repertoire of narratives. In many ways such stories are meant to illustrate the 'culture' of jihad with its miracles, mysticism, spiritual elevation and transformation one can expect in the path of Jihad.⁴⁵¹

Let us now look at an example of how the logical structure works in extremist Muslim discourse. The example here is the HUT discussion forum entitled, "*Jihad is the only way to Kalifah* " ⁴⁵² The discussion thread quotes an article apparently written by a *Mujahid*. The narrative is initially quoting religious scriptures in a poetic argument that would create resonance by appealing to ingrained religious beliefs among Muslims. This is important as his starting premise on scriptural epistemic rationality presented in a poetic manner that would get the initial attention of his perspective audience. But what happens then is a move to use analogical reasoning.

⁴⁵¹ These themes are reflected in the findings under the resonance cluster in Chapter 7 under the theme of "*The Culture, mysticism and miracles of Jihad.*"

⁴⁵² "*Jihad is the only way to Kalifah*", Hizb ut-Tahrir Discussion Forum, <http://forum.hizbuttahrir.org/showthread.php?t=2587&highlight=mujahid> (accessed 5 May 2012).

He then uses analogical reasoning by describing a hypothetical military coup d'état in American society in which *“a number of military officers were carrying out an order to change the liberal democratic system that had been accepted by all sections in the American society. Furthermore the system is considered as something that is standard and established, and it does not yield to any replacement or substitution.”*

He then argues what the likely reaction of the people of the country will be. Subsequently he rationalises that the American populace will vehemently object by force of arms if necessary to this forced change of democratic systems. This he qualifies as being in accordance to acceptable and internationally recognised regulations on the right of defense, which would naturally free the population of accusations of terrorism and other associated allegations.

But then he correlates the situation to Muslim communities and questions why this is only applicable to the West and not to Muslims when their rights and sovereignty is violated.

“If the use of force and arms have been approved and allowed for every nation, in order to protect the established concept that had long been common between them. Then, how come the same method is prohibited and forbidden for the Muslims the moment its identity, standard practices and

Rabbani (Godly) system are facing confiscation and elimination by a military faction or others that have sold their honour and loyalty to the enemies of the Ummah?

Why are the Islamic Ummah banned from defending its fundamental teachings and standard practices (eg. syariah, khilafah, etc) with the use of force, when every other nation and society are practicing the same method?

Why, when other nations or society are defending its standard principles with the use of military might it is regarded as advanced and legitimate, and that it is one of their basic rights which should be given outright support and assistance?!

Whereas, supposed that the Islamic Ummah is practicing similar tactic, "jihad" and its manner of operations would right away be labeled as backward and that it is an act of terrorism or that it is an uncivilized way as well as many other false accusations!

"Why is that approach allowed for you and not for us?!!"

Besides the analogical reasoning used, let us see if the narrative is logically

argued. The premise here is that armed resistance is justifiable when any community is threatened with an *armed* force that will infringe on their democratic freedom. The conclusion that follows is that if there are double standards in how this is applied when it comes to Muslims, it is not acceptable. The actual presence of double standards is of course debatable. In a simplified form, the statement is logical as the premise can support the conclusion. It naturally becomes complex when you have more variables coming in and especially when it is applied to particular contexts. This demonstrates the principal behind the logical structure. A premise that supports conclusion and hence a logical argument exists when it is reduced to its bare ingredients. There is a highly persuasive effect to this analogical reductionism as it makes ‘sense’ to a universal audience. But does that mean that while the logical structure exists, it will be defeated when more variables and different contexts are applied? This is not necessarily the case as the findings will reveal that extremist narratives will produce their own set of supportive variables and contexts. Let us now look at how this narrative gets weakened in the discourse that follows.

One reader first questions the *ethos* of the contributor to question what he has actually done for Jihad and thus subtly insinuates that he ascribes to the idea only in words and not action. The next reader categorically counters every point in the article with instances in Islam and world history where armed resistance was not the case as well as countering the idea by citing the example set by the Prophet Muhammad. But he agreed with the author on only one point- that the West does not want the Islamic community to rise and oppose their oppression.

The next reader asserted that a caliphate is necessary before any ideas of Jihad can be entertained. Also one should be careful in contexts where Jihad is appropriate as it can degenerate to extreme levels,

“The Messenger established the first Islamic state without Jihad. This fact is contradictin xxx's post.

Jihad is only fightin kafir, to get security in Muslim hands so that the Ummah can establish Islam. But the apparatus of Khilafah can only be established and sustained if the Society is revived.

Khilafah needs the support of the masses and people of influence, or it will not get established, and this is shown in the seerah, in the actions of the Messenger prior to Medina. You can't mix rules of Islam like the Jihadis do, like hadood punishment before even havin Khilafah, and fightin jihad on muslims, what's next if your boss didn't pay your wages this week youre gonna fight jihad on your company!”

We can therefore see how this argument gets weakened by logical discourse. But interestingly enough the basic premise of resistance to aggression is supported by all the readers in the forum. It is the means / end states and when it should be applied that are argued over.

To summarise, in extremist narratives as in any narrative for that matter, it is not always the correct or most rational argument that convinces. But it is the impression, actual presence or approximation to actual formal rationality in the argument that greatly improves the prospects for persuasion. It is also highly dependent on the social context and the psychology of the intended audience. Most importantly the narrative will have the greatest impact only when it is in an environment for social communications that approximates the ideal speech situation and true communicative action in the minds of the audience. In other words, the most convincing narrative is one that creates an impression of rationality or is actually rational and is presented in a medium that is unconstrained by power dynamics.

CHAPTER 6

STUDY FINDINGS

PART 1

THE IDEOLOGICAL CLUSTER

An analysis of the web posts, ideological literature and selected web forum posts, revealed a total of twenty three themes. Some of them reinforce current ideas such as those attributing extremism to the influence of conspiracy ideas, a supremacist belief system or the power of emotively resonant messages. What is different though from previous depictions is evidence of their logical construction and argumentation. More importantly, the key discoveries come from a significant number of newly discovered themes that contradict the idea of rhetoric being the dominant feature of such narratives. The last chapter will focus on themes which illustrate the type of argumentation logic and technique employed by extremists and their sympathisers.

The twenty four themes are categorised into three clusters. The ideological cluster, the resonance cluster and the arguementation cluster. In this chapter we focus on the ideological cluster. The ideological cluster encompasses themes that focus on ideas, concepts or a perspective. Many of them employed a rational argumentation approach that was either ‘empirical’⁴⁵³ or corroborated in some other form. It also incorporates logical arguments that employ deductive or inductive reasoning. The themes in this cluster are as follows:

⁴⁵³ Not purely in the statistical sense but evidence that has enough precedence to show that it is not an anomaly or misconstrued idea.

- a) “The Accepted Idea.”
- b) “Appealing to Universal Values.”
- c) “Biasness of Mainstream Media.”
- d) “True but little known.”
- e) “Realisable results and viable solutions.”
- f) “Seeing past the ruse – creating consciousness.”
- g) “From Weak to Powerful to Supremacist.”
- h) “The Conspiracy.”
- i) “Lackey Muslims and Hypocritical leaders.”

Ideological Cluster

a. “The Accepted Idea”: Narratives that espoused this theme used mainstream academic and political discourse to strengthen their arguments. The narratives used by extremists on their websites are not just peppered with religious rhetoric and expositions to convince readers of the veracity and logic of their assertions. Many of their narratives also appropriate theories, ideas and assertions found in mainstream academia (e.g. Political science) and Western journalistic analysis to add credibility to their ideas. Some are simply mainstream reports on atrocities that appear in global news agencies. For instance,

the report on the t-shirts produced by IDF (Israeli Defense Force) Snipers that showed a pregnant Palestinian woman in the cross-hairs of a sniper rifle with the tag line: “One shot-Two Kills.” Another example shows Osama Bin Laden quoting from the book, *Imperial Hubris- Why the West is losing the War on terror*, written by Michael Scheuer who was formerly with the CIA and ran the counter terrorist centre’s ‘Bin Laden Station.’⁴⁵⁴ Osama Bin Laden actually says in his speech, “...and if you like to get to know some of the reasons for your losing your war against us, then read the book of Michael Scheuer in this regard,”⁴⁵⁵ The use of the works by credible sources is not limited to works that seem to associate with ideas from the far left, but they also refer to works that are general in perspective. For instance, ‘Abu Suhail’ in his article in *Inspire* called, “*The Way forward*” used this quote by John Perkins, the author of *Confessions of an Economic Hitman* to illustrate how the essence of what al-Qaeda was doing is in line with universal sensibilities that resist subjugation and rule by tyrants.

...What Paine offered to his countrymen in the brilliant Common Sense was the soul that my young Indonesian friends had referred to — an idea, a faith in the justice of a higher power, and a religion of freedom and equality that was diametrically opposed to the British monarchy and its elitist class systems. What Muslims offered was similar:

⁴⁵⁴ Ken Silverstein, "Six Questions for Michael Scheuer on National Security" By Ken Silverstein, *Harper's Magazine*. <http://www.harpers.org/archive/2006/08/sb-seven-michael-scheuer-1156277744> (accessed August 26, 2011).

⁴⁵⁵ ABCNews, "Transcript of quote by Osama Bin Laden about Michael Scheuer and his book", *abcnews*, abcnews.go.com/images/Politics/transcript2.pdf (accessed August 26, 2011), 5

faith in a higher power and a belief that developed countries have no right to subjugate and exploit the rest of the world. Like colonial minutemen, Muslims were threatening to fight for their rights, and like the British in the 1770s, we classified such actions as terrorism. History appeared to be repeating itself.⁴⁵⁶

There is another aspect of the '*Accepted Idea*' theme that resonates particularly with Muslims. Absolutist and narrow perspectives from extremists link themselves to Islamic concepts that are more widely accepted. In the *Al –Muhajiroun* website, issues regarding *Takfeer* (excommunication from the religion) are linked to *Aqeedah* (doctrine of faith). All Muslims accept the idea of *Tawhid* (Oneness of Allah) but they differ in the idea of *Takfeer*. By linking the former widely accepted idea with the latter (in which there are contentions), not only do extremists create resonance to their interpretation when pitched in terms of accepted ideas in the Muslim world, they also gain an aura of legitimacy.

On this issue of *Takfeer*, this website stated, "...Clearly, beyond doubt, all the rulers of Muslim countries are *Kafir Murtad*⁴⁵⁷. In order to purify our '*Aqeedah* and

⁴⁵⁶ Taken from 'Confessions of an Economic Hitman' p 49 cited in Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula's publication '*Inspire*' Issue 5, '*The Tsunami of Change*' p 43-44.

⁴⁵⁷ Traitors to the religion who have left its fold.

Tawheed, we must declare them Kafir or we too may fall under the banner of kufr."⁴⁵⁸

Thus *Takfeer* is not used solely to gain moral superiority over the other, but to abase the enemy who is Muslim as well for the purpose of resistance. There is a clear instrumental rationality behind Muslim extremists using an extreme interpretation of *Takfeer*, for it legitimises and leverages on any existing populist rationale for rebellion and change of systems. It is this communicative ability to create linkages with legitimate / more accepted notions and the needs and wants of people that gives extremist narratives their credibility and ability to persuade.

b. "Appealing to Universal Values"

Extremist narratives do not always seek to espouse a logic or value system unique only to their ideology. What we fail to see is how extremist narratives often tap onto universal value systems that *anyone* from any socio-economic segment in society can relate to. Some of the most common of these values would include altruism, nobility, honour, the idea of sacrificing for a greater good, courage and most importantly the idea of *freedom*. Such values are universal and they create resonance with almost anyone. Freedom in the extremist Muslim context extrapolates to the idea of resistance against tyranny and oppression. It also encompasses *freedom of thought*. This advocates the idea that one should not be slaves to a mode of thinking that the state wants but instead the mind should be unrestricted and free to seek the 'truth'. This truth, as extremists believe, would ultimately lead those who are 'searching' towards their kind of ideology. Those

⁴⁵⁸ muhajiroun.com, "6 Reasons why all the rulers are Murtad", *Fake Salafi Refutations*, http://salafiyah-jadeedah.tripod.com/Governments/Reasons_Murtad.htm (accessed October 14, 2011).

wishing to combat such ideologies might find this notion very hard to accept as there is the fear that accepting the presence of universal values in extremist narratives might give an impression of legitimacy to their cause.

In the “*Clearguidance forums*”, the following quote from Hassan Al-Banna was featured;

I am a traveller seeking the truth, a human searching for the meaning of humanity and a citizen seeking dignity, freedom, stability, and welfare under shade of Islam. I am a free man who is aware of the purpose of his existence and who proclaims: Truly, my prayer and my sacrifice, my living and my dying are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds: no parter (sic) has He. This, am I commanded and I am of those who submit to His Will. This is who i am, who are you? - Shaheed Hasan Al-Banna ⁴⁵⁹

Notice that in this inspiring quote, ‘truth’, ‘humanity’, ‘dignity’, ‘freedom’, ‘stability’ and ‘welfare’ are universal values and concepts that appeal to all. Similarly, a discussion thread appeared in the Internet discussion forum, *Islamic Awakening* entitled “*Syed Qutb - John Locke of the Islamic World.*” What is remarkable about this post

⁴⁵⁹ "Post entry 12-30-2003, 12:20 AM ." *clear guidance forum Archives*.
http://clearguidance.blogspot.com/2004_01_04_archive.html (accessed December 6, 2009).

written apparently by a well read individual, other than it gives a benign and positive take on the works of Syed Qutb, are labels such as *'responsible governance'* that again appeal to universal sensibilities. In this narrative Qutb's ideas are compared to John Locke's ideas about legitimacy of government and freedom. The author emphasised how Qutb's use of independent reasoning and the logical thinking used in *ijtihad* can be used to reform Muslim societies. Qutb's ideas also echoed John Locke's idea that waging war against the state is a necessity if it has lost its legitimacy. Qutb and Locke both emphasized on the concept of freedom which is a universal value.

"Both Locke and Qutb imagined freedom in the same absolutist terms. For Locke, freedom was a God-given, inalienable attribute that took priority over civil society. Qutb, who argues that Islam meant freedom from human authority, echoed Locke's ideas about natural rights as God-given and more important than civil society and government."

The author also suggested reading Qutb from the perspective of the values espoused as these are similar to Locke. This he says demonstrates the convergence of similar values from the enlightenment period and basic Islamic principals.

While advancing the notion that there can be an alternate reading of Qutb by Muslim ideologues, I am also suggesting that discourses are what we make of them. Ideas have impact on reality, but reality too has an impact on the formation of ideas and on how ideas are interpreted and

applied. Some Muslims read Qutb and are motivated to use violence against their regimes and the West—whom they perceive as tyrannical. But Muslims should read Qutb's ideas as advocating freedom and responsible governance—perhaps the most important traits missing from many Islamic societies today. Internal diversity. The different readings of Syed Qutb underscore the diversity within Islam and Muslims.

A sympathetic reading of Qutb reveals him as a philosopher of freedom and justice—and not a philosopher of terror. Similarly, a sympathetic view of the Muslim World will reveal a thirst of freedom and justice and not a penchant for violence or hate. The Enlightenment—a global movement? The most important lesson that can be drawn from this comparison between Locke and Qutb is the fundamental convergence in basic Islamic principles and enlightenment values. The West while undergoing socio-political and culture reform under the influence of enlightenment thinking may have moved away from Christianity and religiosity. But curiously it also moved closer to Islam. The most compelling irony of the tensions between Islam and the West is not how different the two

are, but indeed how similar the two civilizations really are.

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The emphasis on universal values such as freedom is again seen in the MPACUK⁴⁶¹ website;

Bosnia marks the death of true Muslims who once lived for justice, equality and freedom. Each and everyone of us is living lies. This is not and was not Islam.

“So I call for the resurrection of these dead ‘Muslims’. I ask you to return to the true Islam and carry your Jihad. What happened in Bosnia didn’t end there. Since then we’ve had Iraq, Palestine and many more.

I ask, how much more manslaughter will it take for you to understand your duty of jihad? They call you retarded on national television, they call you dogs in the Telegraph and now they’re proudly implementing legislation to ban the

⁴⁶⁰ " Syed Qutb - John Locke of the Islamic World.", *Islamic Awakening Forums*, <http://forums.islamicawakening.com/f18/syed-qutb-john-locke-of-islamic-world-35365/> (accessed October 14, 2011).

⁴⁶¹ Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK (MPACUK)

Burqa!⁴⁶²

In essence, author is appealing for justice to Muslims who have been ill-treated anywhere in the world, freedom to practice their faith and equality in the way they are treated. We can see how when pitched in this frame, the argument appeals to universal sensibilities which extremists capitalize on. This universal value frame is also seen in an article that appeared in *Inspire*⁴⁶³ that talked about the issue of the Niqab,

“As mentioned above the Niqab is not mandatory on Muslim Women according to many scholars. But because it is a right of Muslim Women and because it has become a symbol of being Muslim today, Muslims must take a firm position in this battle and dig in their trenches.”

Here we see extremists use the same argument the West uses against them, namely women have the right to choose what they want to wear. So in this case they choose to wear the Burqa. This is contrary to stereotypical ideas that they are forced to do so. The issue is now about the right to choose. Thus extremists when it suits their arguments will revert to universal values and those which the West can identify with to garner credibility to their argument.

⁴⁶² "MPACUK - MPACUK calls for the resurrection of the dead.", *MPACUK / Empowerment through political participation*, <http://www.mpacuk.org/content/view/5811/> (accessed October 14, 2011).

⁴⁶³ *“The West should ban the Niqab covering its real face”*, Yahya Ibrahim, *Inspire* Issue 1, pg 19.

Similarly, the Al-Qassam Martyrs Brigade⁴⁶⁴ in its website quotes *Yusuf al-Qaradawi's*⁴⁶⁵ stance of condemning terrorism and the idea of a global jihad but advocatating legitimate use of suicide bombing tactics if it is in the course of resisting occupation.

Al-Qaradawi distinguishes between jihad and irhab- terrorism, or between legitimate irhab -being feared by the enemy to deter it from any aggression, and illegitimate irhab, that is terrorizing innocent people as done by groups using the name of Islam, which declare world on the whole world in an illegitimate use of jihad in an inappropriate setting, terrorizing innocent people- Muslims and non-Muslims- in order to achieve alleged political ends inside or outside Muslim lands, flagrantly contravening the principles and ethics of jihad in Islam. Hence Al-Qaradawi condemned violent acts committed by extremist groups in Muslim and non-Muslim countries against innocent people, whether tourists or others. He further stripped the indiscriminate killing and shedding of innocent lives committed by these groups of any legitimacy.

⁴⁶⁴ Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of the Islamic resistance movement Hamas.

⁴⁶⁵ An Egyptian Islamic scholar associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, *see* Yusuf al-Qaradawi : The Investigative Project on Terrorism", *The Investigative Project on Terrorism*, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/profile/167> (accessed August 26, 2011).

Al-Qaradawi is extremely careful to distinguish between extremist groups that declare war on the whole world, killing indiscriminately, tainting the image of Islam and providing its enemies with fatal weapons to use against it, on the one hand, and on the other groups resisting occupation.

He does not hesitate to justify martyrdom operations, considering them to be the weapon of one with no other options, who is deprived of equivalent weapons to those of the enemy, in order to defend his home and his land. God's justice does not allow the weak to be completely deprived of any weapon, hence the latter's use of his own body as a deterrent weapon. In any case, the ethics of jihad must always be respected, and only combatants can be targeted.⁴⁶⁶

Through their condemnation of terrorism and by renaming their struggle as fighting against occupation, the Ezzedeen Al Qassam Martyrs brigade gain legitimacy as they appeal to universal values of fighting for independence and freedom. Qadrawi's

⁴⁶⁶ "Jihad becomes obligatory upon every Muslim - Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades", *Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades - Information Office*, http://www.qassam.ps/specialfile-288-Jihad_becomes_obligatory_upon_every_Muslim.html (accessed October 14, 2011).

argument above lists religious and inclusivist ideas of cooperating with the international community and not wanting to engage in offensive jihad unless threatened by the neighbouring nations. But this distinction stops at the issue of Palestine and Iraq. Its addresses many tolerant aspects of Islam but draws the line at Israel which he sees as an occupation force.

This argument is even more appealing as it addresses common criticisms of terrorism. Terrorism by its very nature is condemnable. But when militancy is framed as resistance against an occupying force and assertions are made against civilian attacks and about confining to only military targets, it gains natural legitimacy. Such rationally argued legitimacy appeals to accepted universal values of ‘independance’ and ‘freedom’. This makes it all the more dangerous, as supporting any kind of militancy easily degenerates to harm done to civilians as conflict is seldom contained and “civilians” and non-combatants usually become a negotiable label. There is seen in how the group still carries out suicide attacks on civilians despite this narrative.⁴⁶⁷ The narrative’s intention ultimately is to remove the impression *Al Qassam* as a ‘terrorist group’.

c. “Biasness of mainstream media.”

This theme stresses that Western media cannot be trusted as it is meant to support the views of the establishment. This theme provides an alternate account of events and issues that culminate in an alternate discourse by forum members that reinforces and

⁴⁶⁷ “Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades -ADL Terrorist Symbol Database ”, *ADL: Fighting Anti-Semitism, Bigotry and Extremism*, <http://www.adl.org/terrorism/symbols/iqb.asp> (accessed August 26, 2011).

extrapolates this version. Readers who are inundated by mainstream media flock to alternate accounts that are not widely propagated. There is the general idea that the ‘truth’ gets repressed and therefore alternate information that is repressed and not well publicised must surely represent the ‘truth.’ We can see this illustrated in the ‘*Feedback from readers*’ section of al-Qaeda’s ‘*Inspire*’ magazine, in which one of the readers wrote,

“I would like to thank you all for providing us with one of the best media information the mujahidin could offer. With the current media under control of the Jews, it is a great change to have news that are from the ummah to the ummah. May Allah bless your efforts and make the magazine a continuous program.”⁴⁶⁸

d. “True but little known.”

This is related to the earlier theme on the distrust of mainstream media. The appeal of this theme lies in the ability of the extremist narrative to provide less known information not found in mainstream media. On another level, the credibility of this alternate account is enhanced by corroborative evidence from credible historical sources or by citing information from Western journalistic sources that might not have garnered much visibility. This is also meant to challenge common impressions about extremist narratives. For instance, the accusation might be that extremist narratives commonly like to portray a picture of conspiracy and misinformation by the West. What extremist narratives do is then cite information that is corroborated from mainstream sources to add

⁴⁶⁸ Inspire Issue 4, Pg 10

credibility to their alternate version. We can see an illustration of this form of rational argumentation, in the “*Clearguidance*” forums where one forum member quoted in response to news about a bombing by terrorists in Tel-Aviv,

“...i tell you what, it would not surprise me if M O S S A D were involved in the Tel Aviv bombings..they got a long history of blowing their own people and blaming the Arabs for political means...” ⁴⁶⁹

The “*Lavon Affair*.” was then cited. This was an actual operation in which Israeli intelligence conducted attacks on post offices and American libraries in Egypt posing as extremists to undermine the then Egyptian government. This is of course a classic example of a ‘False Flag’ ⁴⁷⁰ operation. The subsequent posts then explained and corroborated what the operation was all about by quoting a non-extremist source of information.

⁴⁶⁹ "Post entry 01-06-2003 06:13 PM ." clear guidance discussion forum archives. http://clearguidance.blogspot.com/2003_01_05_archive.html (accessed October 14, 2011).

⁴⁷⁰ “False Flag Operations”, *For those who want to know: Reliable information on health, energy, media, war, elections, 9/11, more*, <http://www.wanttoknow.info/falseflag> (accessed August 26, 2011).

"<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L05117574>"⁴⁷¹

~THE Lavon affair... In 1954, Israeli agents working in Egypt planted bombs in several buildings, including a United States diplomatic facility, and left evidence behind implicating Arabs as the culprits."⁴⁷²

If a forum reader were to make independent checks, he or she would be able to find out that there was actually such an event that even the Israelis would admit.⁴⁷³

The culminative effect of such arguments that are built up by this rational argumentation process, have a powerful resonant effect on any subsequent ideas generated by extremists. These new ideas will leverage on such ‘proof’ to hint at further conspiracies or to compare present similar incidents to what happened in the past. In this case, their assertion would be that many ‘attacks’ by extremists were actually ‘false flag’ operations used to make Muslims look bad. Even though further research will reveal conspiracy theories for what they are, such narratives still create the initial cognitive opening in the minds of readers. This will now make them doubt everything from

⁴⁷¹ The link cited in the post (<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L05117574>) no longer exists. But using the Internet Archives “Wayback Machine”, the article was recovered. “AlertNet is funded and run by Reuters Foundation -- an educational and humanitarian trust created by Reuters, the global news and information group. The aim is to put Reuters core skills of speed, accuracy and freedom from bias at the service of the humanitarian community.” See: - "Reuters AlertNet - Islamic Jihad claims Tel Aviv bombs - Lebanon TV.", *Internet Archive: Wayback Machine*, <http://web.archive.org/web/20030114213715/http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L05117574> (accessed October 15, 2011).

⁴⁷² "Post entry 01-06-2003 06:13 PM." clear guidance discussion forum archives. http://clearguidance.blogspot.com/2003_01_05_archive.html (accessed October 14, 2011).

⁴⁷³ Doron Geller, "The Lavon Affair", *Jewish Virtual Library – Homepage*, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/History/lavon.html> (accessed August 26, 2011).

mainstream Western sources. The alternate perspectives offered by extremists thus become more credible to the readers.

e. “Realisable results, viable solutions.”

A common criticism raised in both extremist narratives and web forums is that activism which is deemed as a pacifist solution will not produce realisable and viable solutions. Activism and similar pacifist methods are seen as placatory methods tolerated by the state as they know that it will help angry young Muslims vent their anger. An article that illustrates this theme appeared in the Chechnyan militant website “*Kavkaz*” that was entitled, “If Jihad is suddenly stopped.”⁴⁷⁴

Let's imagine, hypothetically, what would happen if suddenly Mujahideen abandon Jihad. Will the peace and Islam prevail in Dagestan? Well the history shows us that the answer is NO. Infidels first would straighten things with blather-Ikhwan, then with businessmen-ut-Tahrirs. The Sufis would not be forgotten either, and large areas of logging in the Siberian taiga would be prepared for them.

In other words such Muslim Activist groups (Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and Hizb ut Tahrir (HUT)) will still be sent to concentration camps and prisons in Siberia no matter how much they conform to official lines.

⁴⁷⁴ "If Jihad is suddenly stopped - Kavkazcenter.com", *KAVKAZ CENTER*, <http://www.kavkaz.tv/eng/content/2009/10/26/11113.shtml> (accessed October 15, 2011).

Over 70 years of "peaceful" Kufr, Muslims of Dagestan were subjugated to an unheard secularization, and the Shariah Courts and the Jesuit talks of Korkmasov about "we do not forbid you to live according to Sharia" reached the point that water was poured into the mouth of a fasting person and the prayer was banned. This is without mentioning the fact that the religion of Allah was universally derided and God-fearing Muslim exhibited as a retarded ignorant. Hajj was banned for decades, and of those understand (sic) the Quran remained only few. All this - the fruits of "peaceful call" of Sufis and their defeatism.

This part of the article cites historical persecution of the Muslim community's right to practice Islam approved in theory but punished in practice in Dagestan. There is sarcasm in citing how peaceful "Sufiist" methods were still ultimately defeatist and a failure. The author then went onto say,

Sayyid Qutb, who gave his life for his beliefs, would have had a big surprised (sic) of the snake tricky Ikhwan today, who for the sake of political expediency abandoned Aqidah and Sharia. Islam is the religion of monotheism and the independence from kufr turned them into a political program which they "bend" to the extent of their benefits and stupidity. The result of nearly a century of activity has led them

to the fact that the "cart is still there." They do not have power in any country in the world, and their presence in parliament of Taghut only consolidated its power and split the Islamic Ummah. In Egypt they in their backs brought Nasser to power, who later was the first who brutally cracked down on them. Since then, the "Ikhwan" were made bargaining chip of democracy. Ironically, now, by the extent of political expediency, they are by bundles thrown into jail, then ascended into the parliament. They can and do both, almost at the same time. The educational process of "tahrirs" can take as long as they wish. As time passes they in the same way as in the time of "People-volunteers", known in the history for their goings to the people, will be forgotten and thrown into the dustbin of history. As well as the Ikhwans.

This excerpt points to the compromising nature of Activist groups (HUT & MB) who are seen as sellouts who took the easy way out and not remaining true to their faith and struggle. The narrative asserts that HUT and MB have not produced any real results. Their 'achievements' are paltry, not significant, ineffectively slow and in fact have made things worse.

“Even if all the mujahedeen at once leave the Caucasus, even if all the Sufi imams will wash the feet of soldiers and policemen, even if Ikhwans will walk like the pioneers, tie

and no beard, kuffar will never rest until the light of Islam will not go out of the mind of the last Muslim!”

This last excerpt asserts that compromising, being subservient and stopping militancy has never and will never help, because the state and Western society ultimately want to remove Islam and it is a war on Islam itself.

f. “Seeing past the ruse – creating consciousness.”

This is referring to deception by the West, non-Muslims and their lackeys on the Muslim world. Extremist websites frequently take great pains to methodically point out the hidden and subtle deception in the narratives of this group as well as in their actions which may seem benign and well intended. One of the main techniques used to expose this deception is to use an alternate version based on an analysis of the issue or event from the viewpoint of the extremists, quoting ‘evidence’ from Western sources themselves or simply to highlight what is supposedly being seen and experienced at the grassroots.

But a precursor to this argument requires having the right mindset. This is portrayed as the need to develop political sharpness and insight and engendering more of the conspiratorial view of history that Ralph Epperson advocates.⁴⁷⁵ In the HUT forum one of the readers wrote:

What ought to be highlighted is that the Ummah keeps

⁴⁷⁵ See section in this chapter on the theme of conspiracy for more details on this.

falling victim to political deception and constant trickery that obscure the sound vision of her issues. The most dangerous style adopted by the enemies and their tools from among the collaborators of thought and politics is the distortion of facts. They resort to infiltrating the Ummah's awareness to deviate her from perceiving her issues and their sound solutions.⁴⁷⁶

The writer here is essentially emphasizing that Muslims given into political deception and trickery of the west are unaware of this being done onto them. For Muslims who are already inclined to believe that politics ultimately involves a great deal of deception, such an argument creates further reinforcement and entrenchment of this idea. This quote is emphasizing the need to cultivate the ability to 'read between the lines' and to 'wake up' from this internalised distortion of facts propagated by the West.

Qaeda al-Jihad Organization in the Arabian Peninsula (Al-Malahim Media) in its seventh issue of the Magazine Jihaad Publications spoke about the deception by the West as part of the plan to destroy or undermine Islam. The quote below is referring to American, French and British presence in the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Arab peninsula,

⁴⁷⁶ " The Jewish war machine continues to unleash its bombs on Gaza - Post # 2 dated 26-02-2009, 08:13 AM ", *Hizb ut-Tahrir Discussion Forum - Powered by vBulletin*, <http://forum.hizbuttahrir.org/showthread.php?t=1874&highlight=highlighted+Ummah+falling+victim> (accessed October 18, 2011).

They use several flimsy pretexts, such as maritime piracy, and alleged saboteurs from land. The objective of this new Crusade is to establish the alleged Jewish state from the river to the sea, demolish Jerusalem, destroy the steadfast heroes in Gaza, and to completely control the peninsula of Islam. You should understand the dimensions of their plan and plot. By Allah, it is one war, in which they mastered deceit, and they were assisted by the traitors (note: They heavily criticise the Al-Saud government as being these ‘traitors.’), as they did in Gaza and Baghdad....This military campaign amassing in Ma`rib, Al-Jawf, Shabwah, Abyan, Sana’a, and Hadramawt, which they kept it away from the media, is just a step towards striking on the tribes and their sons with flimsy and false pretexts that are really aimed at breaking the dignity of the tribes, disarming them, controlling their land, and killing their sons in order to make it easy for the foul agents and the Crusade to humiliate them.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁷ “Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula : ‘and They Devised Plans and Allah too had Arranged a Plan’, Post entry dated 02-22-2009, 03:08 AM”, *Qaeda al-Jihad Organization in the Arabian Peninsula (Al-Malahim Media) in its seventh Issue of the Magazine Jihaad Publications*, <http://www.ansar1.info/showthread.php?t=1323>, (Accessed December 24, 2010).

This above site no longer allows viewers to see the posts without registering as a member. The same post can also be viewed at : Shaykh Nasir al-Wuhaishi, ““They were plotting and Allah too was plotting”, Post Dated : 22nd February 2009, 14:59, Shaykh Nasir al-Wuhaishi, *Ku soo Dhawoow Golaha Islaamiga ah ee*

In other words any benign reasons given by the Americans or their allies for military presence are not to be believed as their actual actions when analysed reveal the truth of their intentions. In this case their analysis leads to the sinister conclusion mentioned in the quote. The appeal of such an argument is not so much in the proposed conclusion. That in itself is enough to enrage but the 'credible' evidence comes from the 'observable' evidence being cited. Namely, American and Western military presence in the Arabian peninsula being a fact no matter what the reason might be.

In the Clearguidance Forums, one writer wrote,

There is a documentary called ""Secret Wars of Desert Storm" (or something similar⁴⁷⁸) that details the deception of the KSA gov. by the U.S. Apparently, there were never any Iraqi troops near the Saudi border. So there's another layer to the deception. This documentary also explains the health effects of the depleted uranium munitions that have been dropped all over Iraq and now Afghanistan. The longterm effects of these weapons is similar to the dreaded biological/chemical weapons of other illegally unelected thug regimes outside the U.S. So there's another layer to the

Alqimmah - Powered by vBulletin, <http://www.alqimmah.net/archive/index.php/t-3524.html> (accessed October 15, 2011).

⁴⁷⁸ It is actually called "Hidden Wars of Desert Storm." See "Hidden Wars Documentary ", *Hidden Wars Documentary*, <http://www.hiddenwars.com/> (accessed August 26, 2011).

hypocrisy.⁴⁷⁹

Thus by citing a rational basis for their worldview based on evidence from neutral Western journalistic investigations, other readers might find subsequent accounts by extremist writers equally credible.

The next example uses a similar form of corroboration but this time using back what Western leaders themselves cite. In the HUT website in an article entitled "*America's designs for the region (New World Order)*" it was mentioned,

US has categorically mentioned it wants to change the way Govts are run in the mid-East according to what it feels are the hallmarks of a democratic govt and human rights. – The 'third pillar' July 1992 Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Edward P. Djerejian delivered an important speech at the Meridian Centre. But most importantly it will forcibly ensure the '3rd pillar' supporting activism, and media.

Therefore, America's progress according to the policy of the "Third Pillar" and the illustration of her vision

⁴⁷⁹ "Forum post dated 10-07-2002 02:57 AM ", *Clarguidance forum Archives*, http://clarguidance.blogspot.com/2002_11_03_archive.html (accessed October 15, 2011).

towards the roots of terrorism indicates the extent of her hatred towards Islam and towards the Muslim people of the region, as well as the extent of her work towards plundering their riches and the faculties of their lands. Islam is the root of "terrorism" according to them and the terrorists of the world and the lands that harbour them are almost exclusively confined to the Muslims and the Islamic lands according to the statements of the American administration officials.⁴⁸⁰

We can see how the last sentence is a conclusion that has skipped a number of steps to arrive there. This is in some ways an *ignoratio elenchi* argument that proves a number of items but leads to a different and not well linked conclusion. I.e. America's emphasis on the 'third pillar' means that it hates Islam. The article also states that America wants control over the people and resources of the world. Now these claims are expected to be substantiated by implicit reading between the lines of the factual narratives. This is possible is one were to work backwards. "Plundering the riches" can be worked back to factual statements made by the US about wanting to change the Middle East. Claims of noble intentions such as wanting to introduce democracy and rights are being portrayed as a US ruse to attain hegemony over the region. This implication gets validated when statements made by US leaders are quoted back and readers are asked to 'read between

⁴⁸⁰ "America's designs for the region(s)", *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, <http://english.hizbuttahrir.org/index.php/africa/questions-a-answers/193-americas-designs-for-the-region-s> (accessed October 18, 2011).

the lines.’ It was quoted in this forum that Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz said, "Democracy will start from Iraq to all the Arab countries." This can also mean toppling other Arab regimes. This emphasis to ‘read between the lines’ that HUT is propagating helps validate extremist analysis and conclusion of events and issues. Thus everything the Americans do will be viewed and read with suspicion. It does not help that there is ‘factual’ evidence that can be contextualised to support some of these claims.

In the *Inspire* magazine, a question was e-mailed to the editor from a ‘moderate’ American Muslim reader that directly criticised al-Qaeda (AQ). What is remarkable is that AQ is trying to show that they can stand up to the worst challenge and scrutiny of their ideas and they do not have to resort to deception. This has immense implications. The writer is supposedly a voice from the grassroots of the US and is an American Muslim. The answer that came back categorically addressed the criticisms.

For instance, the criticism from the US reader said,

For example, your latest issue of *Inspire* condemns the lies within the American media, however, you too confuse your reporting in writing that “Obama is deceiving in claiming that his war is a war against al Qaeda rather than Islam.” This is a lie from your own end. America has seven million Muslims who live in peace here with no conflict with the government or public.

To wit the reply given was,

We'll give you an example. The British Colonialist rule upon the Muslim world was a horrible page in our Islamic history. When the British ruled our lands, did they carry out a mass slaughter on every last Muslim they could find? No. Yet they waged war on Islam. How? By intending to control us, and eventually dividing us into many nation states. They were responsible for the destruction of the last remains of an Islamic Caliphate in March of 1924. And how were they able to do that? By the use of pawns in the Muslim world, people who don't have any honor for the sake of the religion. For them to destroy it and replace it with completely un-Islamic puppet governments is an act of war through the means of deception.⁴⁸¹

Here the reply is using historical exemplifications and applying the same logic used by the critique but in a different context. They are able to address criticisms by presenting alternate contexts the reader has not considered before. But most importantly, in a context or logical frame that makes them look favourable. In this case, the critique's assertion is that there is no 'war on Islam' as the majority US Muslims are living peacefully there. The counter to this is, no, that is not true because US Muslims not aware of their subjugation. This allows the West to exert control over them and keep them

⁴⁸¹ Inspire issue 5, 9-11

divided, similar to how the British did in the past. This casts doubt in the minds of readers making them question if they have been indoctrinated by mainstream rhetoric and logic that makes them unaware of their subjugation.

In the discussion forum following the YouTube lecture by Awlaki entitled, “*Allah is Preparing us for Victory*” & “*True Warrior*”, one of the readers said,

87 years they enslaved us for ever more... they took away our khilafah and among themselves "they" rejoiced and made pacts to never allow Muslims to be free and unite globally. But how can they deny the people who follow Allah Azzawaajal - look how we awaken from our long sleep. How did those before us deny Islam in it's entirety. Al Khilafah will come to us, our children just as it was taken from our ancestors. May it be a light for the world a hub of justice. ⁴⁸²

This forum quote shows the ‘injustice’ frame that is typical in such discussion threads. But more importantly, the underlying theme is that this injustice has become so

⁴⁸² Forum quotes dated 1 Sept 2011 captured from Youtube, no longer exist on the internet. Both videos can be seen at this reference: kerala567. "Imam Anwar Al Awlaki - Allah is preparing us for Victory - YouTube ." YouTube - Broadcast Yourself. . <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPJU2cbYOnE&feature=related> (accessed October 18, 2011). & The-Tableeghisareliar. "Anwar Awlaki True Warrior - YouTube ." YouTube - Broadcast Yourself. . <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35IWOXVI8KI> (accessed October 18, 2011).

normalised that Muslims no longer even recognise it. They are therefore ‘sleeping’ and need to get awakened by following the ‘true’ path of Islam.

Another reader reinforced this idea of ‘awakening’ in the same discussion thread by saying,

"So true, Look around, we are awaking to see the world for what it is. We seek to restore our global status, our lands oppressed and conquered and our honour is mud.? We are reviving our history, we will rise again and look at khorasan. so much is going on. Look at Al Sham and Irak of this hadeeth. Subhan Allah."

Observe how the writer connects ‘awakening’ with what comes after that. This next step is the struggle to regain the state of supremacy that Islam used to have. This state of Islamic supremacy is thwarted by being desensitised to the ‘injustice’ happening to Muslims. This is also part of the ‘ruse’ to keep Muslims ‘asleep’ and compliant. This ‘ruse’ is aided by the very nature of contemporary society and materialism.

Another writer in the same discussion thread again reinforces this theme of ‘awakening’ but contextualised it to the material world that keeps Muslims ‘asleep’ to the injustices being perpetrated against them,

Mash'Allah so true, 12 years to 13 years ago my
brothers around me spoke of conflict against Islam,

Khorasan, Al Mahdi. Back then a young boy, lost in the material world I had no interest but today the world is so different. Muslims crave for Islam, Muslim crave for their global identity and status to be restored and we ALL recognise each other as Muslim. Gone are the nationalist differences. Look at the world Hotspots? and read Hadeeth of Rasool Allah - Subhan Allah

The idea of a 'ruse' and how one can only appreciate the true nature of what is transpiring if they are woken up to it, has promoted some groups such as HUT to produce a lot of 'political analysis' articles. HUT is heavy on 'political analysis' for two main reasons. One, Muslims must be politically savvy to be aware of the injustice being done onto them. If not, they will be unaware of such injustice and worse still being desensitised to it, actually promote it. Secondly, such political analysis encourages readers to "read-between-the lines." This ability they repeatedly emphasise will help them discover such 'ruses' by the West.

g. "From Weak to Powerful to Supremacist."

Extremist narratives are also appealing because of the inferiority complex reversal they do. They do not just emphasize on the golden age of Islam but rather on the inherent moral and spiritual inferiority of non-Muslims which leads to an equally inferior lifestyle and capabilities. This role reversal is especially appealing to someone who might feel that in a secular system they are made to feel inferior, or to someone in a Muslim country, not

faring as well as their counterparts in non-Muslim countries.

This role reversal then degenerates into supremacist notions. Many extremist sympathizers have also described how ‘new’ extremist Muslim ideologues, like Abu Yahya Al-Libi and Khalid bin Abd al-Rahman al Husaynan, give an impression of a strong, fearless and uncompromising Islam that can stand up to the West that appeals to the young.⁴⁸³ Here, extremist sympathizers have moved from their inferiority complex to feeling equally powerful as the non Muslim ‘other’ and finally to feeling superior to them. Extremist narratives need to foster this supremacist mindset as it is a necessary precondition to develop the confidence to go against a powerful enemy. Take this quote from the *Clearguidance forum* for example,

*“...These kuffar are not strong, rather their system is the most fragile and weak system, and their individuals/people are the most fragile and weak people if you only look at how they live. The only reason that they are dominant at the moment is that the Muslims have sat back from their obligations...”*⁴⁸⁴

This self flagellation of blaming oneself has another purpose; it is meant to create the notion that Muslim apathy is what is causing their state of degradation and from claiming their rightful place of power.

⁴⁸³ David Stringer, "Newsvine - Brash and violent: al-Qaida's new mouthpieces", *Newsvine - Get Smarter Here*, http://www.newsvine.com/_news/2011/06/01/6763959-brash-and-violent-al-qaidas-new-mouthpieces (accessed August 28, 2011).

⁴⁸⁴ "Forum Post dated Tuesday, January 06, 2004, post # 3", *clear guidance forum archives*, http://clearguidance.blogspot.com/2004_01_04_archive.html (accessed October 18, 2011).

In the HUT discussion thread called '*Can there be an Islamic Democracy?*', there is an emphasis on the historical supremacy of Islam in terms of better governance systems. The author highlights the supposed origins of the defeatist mindset / inferiority complex among Muslims by citing historical evidence seen in Western documentaries and research. In this instance quoting Professor Jim Khalili's documentary on the BBC called '*Science and Islam*',

*"As Islamic civilisation declined they looked at the west and decided, erroneously, that the reason they had bettered themselves was because of their separation of religion from temporal affairs (which is true enough because the Church couldn't really rule as it had used it's archaic rules from the Rome of 2,000 years ago) and through democracy and so began to follow them..."*⁴⁸⁵

This is a logically constructed argument using historical precedence to instead support supremacist ideas. The same pattern is repeated. The non-Muslim system is made to look inferior. i.e. "...*the Church couldn't really rule as it had used it's archaic rules from the Rome of 2,000 years ago...*" Then the narrative does self-flagellation by describing the source of further Islamic decline as a result of having lost sight of their superior system and instead following the inferior / flawed system of the non-Muslims.

⁴⁸⁵ "Can There Be an Islamic Democracy? - Post # 5 dated 14-03-2009, 03:19 AM ", Hizb *ut-Tahrir Discussion Forum - Powered by vBulletin*, <http://forum.hizbuttahrir.org/showthread.php?t=1881&highlight=Islamic+Democracy> (accessed October 18, 2011).

The historical precedence is also meant to show to readers how turning to the West is not better as they already have a superior system. A caveat again needs to be made at this point. There is nothing wrong in being proud of one's cultural position or making a conscious choice to follow it as it is deemed better. It only becomes extremist, when the 'other' is belittled for the purpose of confrontation and to forcibly impose one's ideas. A middle ground would be to be proud of one's system of belief / culture but respecting and even learning from anything different. Unfortunately, the supremacist mindset extremist narratives foster are meant to culminate towards extremist solutions.

The supremacist theme is best reflected in Ed Husain's experiential account of his journey through Muslim extremism. Husain spoke about the indoctrination process during the formative period of recruitment into such movements. The observed tactics included an open door policy and a willingness to have a debate or discourse.⁴⁸⁶ This made him feel special and not like a kid as he would have within the traditional Islamic circle of his parents. To him it was an act of rebellion against the traditional authority of his parents. So with his new found friends he had a place in the world. Furthermore being a teenager, he was impressed by the 'tough guy / bad boys' image that YMO (Young Muslim Organisation) created on the streets, one with morals but no vice.⁴⁸⁷ The other aspect of appeal was in the sense of belonging to a cause and pride he felt when the lectures in YMO reinforced the idea of Islam's superiority.⁴⁸⁸ A departure from how he felt previously belonging to a minority group. Later this extended to HUT instilling a

⁴⁸⁶ Husain, 32

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 32-33

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 34-36

notion of them being a “*superior sort of Muslim.*”⁴⁸⁹

For Husain, another source of appeal towards HUT, was that he noticed that members were of a higher intellectual calibre. To him they always had answers to hard questions that others would give only political or dodgy answers to. One of his main reasons to move to the HUT was that he felt they had concrete ideas as opposed to vague ideas (he considered Mawdudi’s ideas as vague) of how to create an Islamic state.⁴⁹⁰ This enabled one from being in a marginal state to become one of superiority instead. YMO had too narrow a focus, HUT to him transcended into global Islam which made him feel that he was part of something bigger.⁴⁹¹

h. “The Conspiracy”

The narratives that espouse an underlying theme of conspiracy in any issue or event are in many ways endemic of the thinking prevalent in the Middle East. Abdel Salam describes how, “*Conspiracy-centred thought in the Arab Press, in Academia and Public opinion frequently promotes the notion that Arabs or Muslims are “targeted” by outside powers.*”⁴⁹² The thinking is that these countries are out to undermine and keep Muslim nations in a state of weakness and subjugation. Abdel Salam explains that this mindset promotes a worldview that is typical of the “*us-versus-them*” dialectic.⁴⁹³ He

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 98

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 90

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 92

⁴⁹² Abdel Salam Mohamed, “WSI Cairo”, *Arab Insight*, www.arabinsight.org/aiarticles/200.pdf (accessed August 28, 2011), 89

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 90

also cites how a conspiracy worldview depends on myths and hearsay as opposed to *'scientific thought that relies on logic, causality, observation, experimentation and methods or theoretical frameworks that assist in the study of various phenomenon...'*⁴⁹⁴

The question here is whether this is an accurate description of how conspiracy ideas cited in extremist websites gain traction with readers. Or do these conspiracy claims also employ the use of rationally constructed arguments through which they gain credence in cyberspace? Or is it purely one that is meant to incite an emotive reaction that helps to transfer blame away from extremists? The final question we need to ask is if the origins of such conspiracy theories and worldview really have a culturalist origin or if this is endemic of the literature that originates from the West itself.

The findings show that while some of the conspiracies cited in the narratives are sometimes based on hearsay and myth, many of the writers go out of their way to provide 'empirical' evidence to prove their validity. Another important caveat needs to be made at this point. This does not mean that such arguments are therefore true or correct just because they are rationally constructed. Rather it shows how a technique of using such 'corroboration', makes these claims more believable to readers. The next few examples from the research done will demonstrate how conspiracy claims gain traction with readers.

In the Malay extremist blog "*Barisan Jihad*", a link was given to a blog on conspiracy theories in which there was a discussion thread in Malay with the title, "*THE*

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 89

CONSPIRATORIAL VIEW OF HISTORY IS NOT THE “CONSPIRACY THEORY” OF THE LAZY AND THE LOSERS!!!”⁴⁹⁵ ⁴⁹⁶ The author of the blog was a fan of the works of A. Ralph Epperson, a conspiracy theorist, historian and writer. His post then went on to quote Western sources and spoke mainly about how this worldview is in fact only for those with keen insights to look past the obvious. He adds that such views are also meant for those who are not conditioned to accept the deluge of mainstream account of issues and events that are in fact products of the powers that be. It is instead the worldview of those who have shed this to see things for what they really are by discovering ‘facts’ that have been suppressed.

The purpose of this blogger’s argument was to initially rebut a criticism made from a renowned Indonesian *Uztaz* called *Eep Sayaefulloh Fatah*, who had criticised Muslims who believed and supported conspiracy theories. One word that is emphasised on in the narratives is the Malay word, ‘*Pecundang*’ which means ‘defeatist.’ ‘Defeatist’ is a word that is frequently cited in extremist narratives from Middle East and Europe as well. He then mentions how those who ridicule and scoff at conspiracy theories are actually pro-American. These are the kind of individuals who ‘worship’ a standardised version of history unquestioningly, “..*pemuja sejarah standard!!*”⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁵ "Barisan Jihad: Video / Lirik We Will Not Go Down Versi Baru - Michael Heart Song For Gaza." Barisan Jihad. <http://barisanjihad.blogspot.com/2009/03/video-lirik-we-will-not-go-down-versi.html> (accessed October 18, 2011).

⁴⁹⁶ "THE CONSPIRATORIAL VIEW OF HISTORY IS NOT THE “CONSPIRACY THEORY” OF THE LAZY AND THE LOSERS!!! « Agoeng Go(yim) Blog", *Agoeng Go(yim) Blog*, <http://attestantofthetruth.wordpress.com/2009/01/07/the-conspiratorial-view-of-history-is-not-the-%E2%80%9Cconspiracy-theory%E2%80%9D-of-the-lazy-and-the-losers/> (accessed October 18, 2011).

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3

He then goes on to say that those who support a conspiratorial view of history are in fact more critical and are among those who think deeply. They are the ones who research deeply into facts and can 'connect the dots'. He deeply hated the criticism which labelled those who believed in conspiracies as 'instigators.' Intellectuals, academics and government officials to him were all brainwashed, one dimensional and shallow people who are not accustomed to being criticised. The blogger then challenges his critics by asking who is really lazy and defeatist, those who are revolutionaries like him or such intellectuals? He lamented how people like him who deviated from standard interpretations were prone to character assassinations. He then went on to give a very telling accusation that was thrown at those who ridicule conspiracy theorists and infantilise their arguments. The blogger hypothesised that this was because such anti-conspiracy theorists and those who support the state were upset, insecure and angry at the fact that more people actually respond to their views rather than the views of the 'intelligentsia' represented by academia and the state despite their scoffing of conspiratorial views. In other words the state and its supporters cannot tolerate the resonance with the masses that such conspiracy theorists enjoy.

Towards the end, he explained that the crux of his argument and stance were part of his efforts to defend the Prophet Muhammad against the Jewish conspiracy to undermine Islam. At this point he took a religious perspective to illustrate how prophets of old were similarly victimised and killed as a result of conspiracies against them. There was also frequent usage of Quranic verses contextualised to support the work of conspiracy

theorists. His blog post was also dedicated to Western conspiracy theorists that he felt were also warring against the campaign to undermine such thinking.

The discussion forum that followed reinforced the ideas brought up by the blogger. This was done by the various readers mutually reinforcing such ideas. One of the readers was actually moved by the emotions expressed by the blogger. He concluded by saying how there is a need for his fellow brothers *'to open their eyes and 'strike.'* Finally he asserts that all the dilemmas in Indonesia are because the people have been 'set up' over the years by foreign agents and so he advised readers to stop 'prostituting' themselves to foreign powers.

There are two important points we can infer from this blog narrative and the discussions that followed. One, readers who sympathise with extremist ideas already have a keen awareness of common criticism about conspiracy theories and cite written works from even Western sources purporting conspiracies in history to back their worldview. Secondly, conspiracy theories offer a 'rational' argument that justifies the transference of blame to external agents. It is in many ways cathartic to those who feel that the origins of their problems have an external source which they can vent their anger towards. But its real appeal comes from the systematic manner in which this external source is rationally constructed to 'prove' that this is indeed the case. For this blogger, the source of appeal also takes the form of a poetic argument that leverages on its emotive appeal. This is evidenced when one of the readers of his blog actually remarked how he can feel the emotion in his words. This gives the impression of sincerity of intention and 'truth.' The hid-

den and the improbable by its very nature then becomes convincing as the impression is that the more information is suppressed and less well known, the more it is likely to be the truth.

In Anwar al-Awlaki's lecture, 'A Call to Jihad - Part 1 of 2' one of the discussion forum readers in youtube said this in response to an allegation that the speaker is not Awlaki,

This is not Anwar's voice? I've listened to over 100 hours of this guy. He does not speak in this manner and would never draw these conclusions. He preaches knowledge and lets the Muslims know about the satanic occultists behind every major terrorist attack in history. Now they expect us to believe that he is preaching this. He has rationality and logic, this man doesn't. If you believe this is him, sorry to tell you but you've been heavily brainwashed. ALLHU AKBAR.⁴⁹⁸

This is indicative of the extremist mindset that refuses to believe anything that diminishes one's worldview. The appeal of Awlaki to the member was that *"he has*

⁴⁹⁸ Forum Post in this youtube video accessed 1 Sept 2009 no longer exists on the internet. Video of his lecture can be seen in: BeautiesOfJannah." ANWAR AL-AWLAKI MESSAGE - A CALL TO JIHAD - 1of2 - YouTube ", *YouTube - Broadcast Yourself*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoV4YDLYFVk> (accessed October 18, 2011).

rationality and logic.” So when a narrative does not meet his expectation of his vision of the charismatic authority figure, he would prefer to say it is a conspiracy to blacken the name rather than believe that his idol has let him down. Thus conspiracies sustain preconceived impressions and worldviews that such individuals prefer to have.

In Imam Anwar al-Awlaki’s lecture ‘*Jihad Fi Sabilillah*’ that appeared on youtube, one of the readers in the discussion forum said,

It was not the era of dajjal's deception when they can't get you? to commit a crime, they usually do it themselves. so it is important to understand who you are really fighting for - and those hypocrites (may God curse them) who say don't fight back when they stage false flag terror attacks and kill your family are also trying to deceive you - know who you are fighting for - God or your "leader" or cia or halliburton. only knowledge and wisdom can bring such understanding.⁴⁹⁹

The thinking here is that a pacifist attitude is meant to keep Muslims subjugated. Therefore empowerment that comes with resistance starts with creating such awareness to see past the obvious.

In the Clearguidance Forums, one of the members wrote regarding the debate that

⁴⁹⁹ Forum post in this youtube video accessed 1 Sept 2009 no longer exists on the internet.

9/11 was part of a Jewish conspiracy,

It was a federal building not a kindergarten! It provided funds to the Israelis, if you ask why would the Jews plan this if it provided them funds, America was slipping into major recession and they needed this to control the oil fields in Iraq and run pipes through Afghanistan to get back on their feet. If it was Muslims who flew the plans (sic) we stand up for them, even if it wasn't we should still say that it was Muslims to rub the salt into the wounds of the enemy, like they've been doing to our brothers and sisters for years.⁵⁰⁰

Here we see that logic is not always necessary for those who have internalized extremist ideas as the sheer weight of their revulsion against injustice warrants any means. The intention here is plain vengeance. So it does not matter whether conspiracy theories are believable or need to be made more convincing. The focus is simply to use any claim or narrative citing conspiracies or otherwise that supports their account of events or makes them look favorable. This is simply another means to an end.

In the HUT Forum, one of the members said,

⁵⁰⁰ "What do Muslims want from the rest of the world? Post dated: 09-03-2002 08:52 PM ", *clear guidance discussion forum archives*, http://clearguidance.blogspot.com/2002_09_01_archive.html (accessed October 19, 2011).

Don't get me wrong, there probably are radical violent Muslim groups out there with their own agendas, but they don't have the manpower or resources to pull off many of the biggest headline making attacks that they're blamed for. Inside jobs are for the purpose of creating the public hysteria that makes it easier to bring in new laws for spying on people and locking them up without any form of accountability.⁵⁰¹

Here we can observe how conspiracies begin with preconceived ideas of what the 'enemy' is about based on what they experience. The grievance is about the intrusion into the private lives of Muslims as a result of anti-terror state measures. This is something that constitutes a very negative experience that is likely to be experienced by some Muslims in the US. The negative experience is then rationalised as being indicative of a greater conspiracy.

In the HUT forum again, another member wrote, "*Divide and Rule, the old colonialist policy still goin strong. History of the Capitalists is pretty damnin (sic), they only know how to destroy nations or are enslavin them for the interests of a few. People*

⁵⁰¹ "Crusade to Murder Muslims & Islam - Post # 10 dated 13-08-2009, 12:01 AM," *Hizb ut-Tahrir Discussion Forum - Powered by vBulletin*, <http://forum.hizbuttahrir.org/showthread.php?t=2261&highlight=Don%27t+wrong%2C+radical+violent+Muslim+groups+agendas> (accessed October 18, 2011).

ain't gonna buy your lies anymore!"⁵⁰² This demonstrates how conspiracy theories also gain their appeal and persuasive power as a result of provable historical precedence. In this case with reference to the colonial tactic divide and rule.

Conspiracy theories also arise out of plausible inferences from political analysis of current events. In *Kalifah.com*, one of the readers demonstrates this when he says in reference to anti-sea piracy patrols by Western nations in Muslim countries, "*Is it possible that the pirates thing is just a mere american trick to justify further intervention in the country??*"⁵⁰³

Finally, we need to understand that despite all this, conspiracies theories equally rely on demonstratable evidence to be persuasive. In the Chechnyan resistance website, *Qaqaz.com*, a reader said in reference to one of their resistance leaders Ibn al- Khattab, who is accused of being behind the September 1999 Moscow apartment bombings,

False media propaganda has accused Khattab of carrying out terrorist acts around the world. Anyone who has read this article with an unbiased mind will know that Khattab's nature is to confront the enemy face to face. And if fighting soldiers and armies who destroy your peoples' lives, turn

⁵⁰² " Crusade to Murder Muslims & Islam - Page 2 - Post # 12 dated 14-08-2009, 10:32 AM", *Hizb ut-Tahrir Discussion Forum - Powered by vBulletin*, <http://forum.hizbuttahrir.org/showthread.php?p=19170&highlight=Divide+Rule%2C+colonialist+policy+goin+strong#post19170> (accessed October 18, 2011).

⁵⁰³ "Q&A: Recent Developments in Somalia: Post # 3." *Khilafah.com - Building a global movement for Khilafah*. <http://www.khilafah.com/index.php/analysis/africa/6065-qaa-recent-developments-in-somalia> (accessed October 19, 2011).

your women into widows and your children into orphans,
amounts to terrorism, then let history bear witness that
Khattab is a terrorist⁵⁰⁴

Just like the legal maxim requiring a valid defense to exist on a balance of probabilities, the idea here is to create a doubt. The doubt here is rationally possible, i.e. that the Moscow Apartment Bombings in 1999 was a false flag operation staged to rally populist support to justify and escalate military operations in Chechnya.

Such claims get corroborated by credible Western sources while at the same time dismissed as conspiracy theories by other credible Western sources. Apparently Khattab in this case told the Russian Interfax news agency in Grozny that he had nothing to do with the Moscow explosions; he was quoted as saying, "*We would not like to be akin to those who kill sleeping civilians with bombs and shells.*"⁵⁰⁵ Because other news sources corroborate such ideas, the allegation of a conspiracy to do character assassination of the militant leader becomes more believable. If a reader wants to be more critical, he or she will also be able to stumble upon or through their own searches other sources of information not mentioned by the extremist website that corroborate such claims as well.⁵⁰⁶ For

⁵⁰⁴ Wed, 26 Jan 2000 23:59:58 -0800, <http://www.qoqaz.net/html/chechnyaprofkhattab.htm>, Title: Jihad in Chechnya by Azzam Publications, Profile of Ibn-ul-Khattab no longer exists, archived version can be seen in "H-Net* Jihad in Chechnya - Profile of Ibn-ul-Khattab (Untuk Tatapan)", *The Mail Archive*, <http://www.mail-archive.com/hizb@hizbi.net/msg06598.html> (accessed October 19, 2011).

⁵⁰⁵ Greg Myre, "Business | Warlord Becoming Most Feared Man In Russia | Seattle Times Newspaper", 15 Sept 1999, *community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com*, <http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=19990915&slug=2983256> (accessed August 27, 2011).

⁵⁰⁶ Writings by investigative journalists in most cases. In this case David Satter was a Moscow correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*. His credentials cast a certain degree of credibility to his findings along with the way he provides corroborative evidence. In his book, he

this example cited, there are of course equally credible perspectives that conversely dismiss such claims as being conspiracy theories.^{507 508}

This last example from the HUT forum shows how conspiracy theories quoted by extremist websites get all the support they need from credibly challenging scientific experts from the West using similar rational arguments based on equally ‘scientific’ observations. In a discussion post called 9/11 Flight U93 pg 1, a member wrote with regards to,

Going back to the video at the start of the thread, the question remains: A jumbo jet crashed into the ground but there is no sign of any part of a plane? And a plane that crashes, how can its debris spread across a 3-mile radius?The editors of Popular Mechanics Magazine, which deals with science, engineering, and technology related issues debated these guys on a neutral forum (Democracy Now!) and made them look like fools⁵⁰⁹

categorically provides evidence to show that “...although the bombings were supposed to have a Chechen “trail,” there was no proof of Chechen involvement...”, see David Satter, *Darkness at Dawn: The Rise of the Russian Criminal State*, (Yale University Press), 2003, 68, 29, 65-70, 250.

⁵⁰⁷ Gordon Bennett, "Vladimir Putin & Russia's Special Services", *Russian Series Publications, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom*, <http://www.da.mod.uk/colleges/arag/document-listings/russian> (accessed August 27, 2011), 29 and footnote no.137, 45.

⁵⁰⁸ Paul J. Murphy, *The wolves of Islam: Russia and the faces of Chechen terror*, (Dulles, Va.: Potomac ;), 2004, 106.

⁵⁰⁹ "911 Flight U93 - Post # 6 dated 15-11-2009, 10:09 PM," *Hizb ut-Tahrir Discussion Forum - Powered by vBulletin*, <http://forum.hizbuttahrir.org/showthread.php?t=2502&highlight=9%2F11+Flight> (accessed October 18, 2011).

We can see by the above examples quoted that there are ‘gradations’ to be found in the appeal of conspiracy theories. There are conspiracy theories which depend on the persuasive power of controversy, sensation and emotion at one end and at the other we have highly ‘empirically’ provable arguments. But mostly arguments usually fall in between these two extremes.

i. “Lackey Muslims and Hypocritical leaders.”

Muslims who are apathetic to the plight of other Muslims are singled out for such criticisms. Extremist narratives suggest that such Muslims who conform to what the state advocates are in fact happily agreeable to be subservient and willing to compromise on their rights and religious stances. By conforming, they feel they will be better accepted and be at the receiving end of any benign but paltry handouts from the powers that be. This version of the self-serving and hypocritical nature of such apathetic / defeatist Muslims is expounded in extremist narratives. But the most hateful comments in both extremist narratives and web forums are reserved for Muslims who support the state or Western society in return for power, status and money. These of course traditionally refer to Muslim leaders who are seen to be supported by Western powers. They are portrayed as being authoritarian, corrupt and self serving.

But this label is not just limited to such Muslim leaders. It also extends a great deal to religious scholars who are seen as being supportive of the views of the state and helping to propagate a version of Islam that is non-threatening to the state even if they

have to reinterpret religious scriptures. The latter is another heavily cited criticism. The great irony is that this is the same criticism that mainstream Muslim scholars throw at extremist Muslims. i.e. that they are taking Quranic verses out of context, misinterpreting or not making reference to related verses that qualify differing stances. Extremist Muslims call such mainstream Muslim Imams as “*Scholars for Dollars*” and cite the exact criticism of being out of context and misinterpretation at them instead. In fact Samir Khan, the editor of al-Qaeda’s *Inspire* magazine in an article entitled ‘The Central Issue’ said, “*No matter how many times we in al Qaeda may respond to certain accusations that are made against us such as takfīr, khawārij, killing Muslims and so on, these scholars for dollars keep echoing the same rubbish repeatedly without ever giving a proper scholarly reply to our responses.*”⁵¹⁰

The assertion here is that any counter radicalisation approach that takes a heavy religious approach is in for a battle of attrition. As in the words of one commentary written in the Internet site “*Yawning Bread*”, the author wrote how such an approach will result in a situation of attrition and a case of “You say, I say” with neither side gaining a clear upper hand.

...But authority in Islam is highly decentralised, and there will always be the problem of "you say, I say". The texts themselves are ambiguous, as Esposito's examples show, which means the "peace" faction may call for selective reading even as they accuse the "war" faction of doing the

⁵¹⁰ Inspire Issue 4, 15

same. A small band of Muslims intent on being extreme can just as logically choose their own authority and their own reading of the texts and feel equally validated in their views.⁵¹¹

Extremist Muslim scholars are portrayed in extremist Muslim websites as being those who are brave enough to go against the tide for the sake of standing up for the truth. For this they are persecuted and vilified. Extremist narratives cite similarity of the situation of such extremist scholars to the prophets of old in Islam who were persecuted for the same reason. Those who are persecuted must thus be standing up for the truth and persecution creates sympathy. In the discussion forum following Al Awlaki's video lecture on "*Jihad Fi Sabilillah*" one of the readers wrote back ,

Mashallah Wallah i love sheikh anwar, he speaks the truth regardless of whether or not the kuffar are pleased with it, this is very rare today as we see many who claim they are scholars but in fact are agents of the west, and when they try to discredit him or label him as terrorist, fundamentalist, extremist this only adds to what we all know already that when you speak the truth they try to silence you either through assassination or jail.⁵¹²

⁵¹¹ "yax-756 The peace faction has got it wrong", Yawning Bread, http://www.yawningbread.org/arch_2007/yax-756.htm (accessed October 19, 2011).

⁵¹² Forum post in this youtube video accessed 1 Sept 2009 no longer exists on the internet.

But the greatest critique seems to be reserved for ‘lackey’ Muslims themselves. In the Website “*Revolution Muslim*”, an article by extremist Muslim ideologue Sheikh Abdullah Faisal entitled “*The Devil’s deception of the goofi soofi*” appeared. The article described Sufis as committing *kufir* (actions that show disbelief to the principle of the oneness of God.). Besides trying to prove the ‘silliness’ of their beliefs, they are vilified because they ultimately side with the West. Even though the argument is based on shaky historical precedence, this alternate perspective nonetheless instigates suspicion and sows an element of doubt in the mind of the reader.

Another problem we have with the Goofi Soofis is that they don't practise al walaa wal baraa, loyalty to the ummah and disloyalty to the enemies of the ummah. The Goofi Soofis always take sides with the crusaders when they invade Muslim lands. I was told by my Algerian classmates in Riyadh that in the 1960s the Mujaahideen used to kill the Goofi Soofis in Algeria because they used to help the French to brutally occupy Algeria. Likewise i was told that the Mujaahideen of chechya blew up and killed the Mufti of chechyna because he was a Goofi Soofi who passed a fatwa endorsing the brutal Russian occupation of this Muslim country.⁵¹³

⁵¹³ Site no longer exists, archived version can be found at: Sheikh Abdullah Faisal, "goofi soofi : Sheikh Abdullah Faisal : Free Download & Streaming : Internet Archive", *Internet Archive: Digital Library of Free Books, Movies, Music & Wayback Machine*, <http://www.archive.org/details/GoofiSoofi> (accessed October 19, 2011).

In SEA, the book by Imam Samudra, one of the Bali Bombers entitled “*I fight Terrorists*” was meant to justify his actions on the basis of the hypocrisy showed by Western nations in their own perpetuations of ‘terror’ against Muslims. He also cited how he saw other battle wizeden ‘*Ulema of the frontier*’ such as himself as the only enlightened ones who recognized this injustice as compared to lackey Ulemas who conformed to the status quo. Therefore, they are the only ones who can and will address this injustice.⁵¹⁴ This demonstrates how in extremist narratives, self-glorification often requires first vilifying the parties that do not support or actually criticizes their worldviews.

⁵¹⁴ Imam Samudra, “I Fight Terrorists” in Greg Fealy & Virginia Hooker, *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia: A Contemporary Sourcebook*, (Singapore: Institute Of Southeast Asian Studies), 2006, 373-376

CHAPTER 7
STUDY FINDINGS
PART 2
THE RESONANCE CLUSTER.

The resonance cluster relates to themes that illustrate how appeal is generated through mainly poetic and rhetorical arguments that evoke and resonate emotive sentiments. This does not mean that there is no rationality or logic involved. Many of the sentiments need corroboration to be persuasive as well. Any idea that inspires needs to be believable as well and this requires some form of rational or logical basis. The themes in this cluster are as follows:

- a) “Noble character of the Jihadist.”
- b) “They want to change Islam to be subservient and passive.”
- c) “The Culture, mysticism and miracles of Jihad.”
- d) “Prophecy.”
- e) “We represent grassroots concerns.”
- f) “You can never fit in.”
- g) “Do not become defeatist.”
- h) “Al-Ghuraaba: The Stranger.”
- i) “The Chosen.”

a) “Noble Character of the Jihadist.”

This must not be mistaken as referring to the influence of charismatic authority as Weber would have referred to it. Here we are referring to an ideal construct in the minds of extremists – that of the noble Jihadist. This is akin to how one envisions the idea of a ‘knight’ but not directly referring to any particular knight. A jihadist’s humble character is a major source of appeal in extremist Muslim narratives. Humility sells in extremist narratives especially when the state and West is seen as being haughty and belittling of other ideas outside its own. The other appealing character is the value of self sacrifice and altruism. The idea here is that if one is willing to give up everything for a cause how can they possibly be self –serving when compared to corrupt and authoritarian leaders in the Middle East and elsewhere. There is special resonance to the idea of youths who go against their family’s wishes and join a Jihad. Family objections and dynamics appear to be one of the key problems that stand in the way of youths wanting to join a Jihad. Thus when the narrative speaks about how the young Jihadist is willing to disobey his parents for a noble case for the sake of God, this resonates a lot with other youth in similar positions facing similar family resistance. The next quality appeals especially to the youth. This quality is the idea of a fearless warrior who laughs in the face of danger and is able to undertake and overcome incredible odds. Stories of Jihadists and their exploits are popular in extremist narrative. It is not simply about this culture of Jihad⁵¹⁵ but about the concept of courage. This quality especially inspires those who ‘fear’ and are anxious about many things in contemporary mainstream society. To have this quality also entails liberation from their fears towards a lifestyle where one is able to live without anxieties

⁵¹⁵ This theme will be elaborated on in page 253 in the section on, “The culture, mysticism and miracles of Jihad.”

as death and martyrdom that follows is actually a sought objective. Honour is another quality that resonates in extremist narratives. This also incorporates strength of religious faith and how jihadists are steadfast and do not compromise on these ideals. Example of Jihadists showing honour and a sense of ethics and honesty is usually contrasted with qualities of the ‘enemy’ (US/ Western nations and their lackeys) who resort to trickery, subterfuge and dishonourable tactics which result in Muslim civilians and honourable jihadists being killed.

In the *Ummah.com* forum, a discussion thread appeared that talked about Chechnyan militant leader, Basayev’s book, “*Book of a Mujahid.*” A reader wrote his comments on the book,

Mujahids are trying not to make the radiance in the eyes fade away. They are living in this world, they are not shunning other people, they start on their journey with an open heart. Quite often they get overwhelmed by fear. Not always do they do a right thing. At times they suffer because of trifles, at times they are small-minded and vain, and at times they think that they cannot grow. Quite often they are assured that they are not worthy of grace or miracle. Not always are they self-confident. They spend sleepless nights and suffer from having done something wrong. But Mujahids always seek calmness and strength in

prayer. That is the most touching thing I have read in a long time.⁵¹⁶

This highly emotive and inspirational comment will find resonance with those who ‘fear.’ It creates the impression that Jihadists are human like their readers and prone to anxieties but it is the strength of faith that gives them the ability to overcome this and do wonders. Readers will find the humility in this approach very refreshing as it brings the idea of a ‘jihadist’ as someone real and similar to them. Here it is not the ideology that appeals but the virtues being expressed. These virtues are impressions anyone would rationally derive based on the described actions, i.e. if someone were to do such actions or express such feelings genuinely, this would constitute corroboration and empirical proof of the quality these actions demonstrate.

In *Ummah.com*, a discussion thread called, “*Senior Saudi Cleric calls the Mujahideen useless criminal,*” appeared. The comment that followed gave a very personal testimony that was meant to demonstrate how Osama Bin Laden was humble, generous and altruistic:

Regarding Usamah bin Ladin, 'Abdullah 'Azzam said: “...I would like to ask Allah - the Mighty and Majestic - to preserve our brother, Abu 'Abdillah, Usamah bin Ladin. I have never laid my eyes on a man like him on this Earth; he

⁵¹⁶ Ummah.com discussion threads retrieved from the Dark Web portal but can also be seen in: "Basayev's "Book of a Mujahid", post #3, dated 9th March 2007", *Islamic Awakening Forums*, <http://forums.islamicawakening.com/f18/basayevs-book-of-a-mujahid-3212/> (accessed October 19, 2011).

lives in his home like one who is in a state of poverty. I used to stay at his home in Jeddah when making Hajj or 'Umrah, and he did not even have a single chair or table in the entire house! He had four wives, and not a single one of their houses had a chair or table in it. Any laborer from Egypt or Jordan has a better house than Usamah. Despite this, if you ask him for a million riyals for the Mujahidin, he would pull out a check and write it for you in a matter of seconds. He once went to one of his sisters and presented her with Ibn Taymiyyah's fatwa regarding Jihad with one's wealth. So, she pulled out her checkbook and wrote a check for eight million riyals. All of a sudden, those who were around her came to talk her out of it, asking her: "Are you insane? You give out eight million in one shot, while you live in a rented apartment? It will cost at least one million for you to build your own house!" So, she went back to Usamah and said to him: "Usamah, my brother, I need one million of these riyals to build a house for myself." So, he said to her: "By Allah, I will not give you back a single riyal, as you live in an apartment, relaxed, while the people are dying and cannot even find a tent to shelter themselves with!" If you were to sit with him, you would think that he was a servant from the servants, with his manners and

manhood. By Allah, I hold him to be like this. I asked Sayyaf to announce a decision to prevent him from moving from here (in Peshawar), but he was always eager to be in the midst of battle. His blood pressure would drop often, so, he would fill his pockets with salt and carry a jug of water with him. He was unable to walk, as he would constantly have to swallow some salt and drink some water in order to raise his blood pressure. Believe me when I tell you that when he would visit me in my home, when he would hear the telephone ring, he would get up and bring it to me, so that I would not have to get up from my place! Such manners, humility, manhood...we ask Allah to preserve him, if He Wills." [*Fi Dhilal Surat at-Tawbah*]; p. 301]⁵¹⁷

In the *MyIWC forum* a thread entitled "*the Imam Anwar Al Awlaki in prison!!*" appeared which showed what could be one of the most inspiring points of appeal of Awlaki to extremists besides his ideas. These comments apparently came from a member who had actually met him and was impressed by his humility and down to earth appeal. "*I found him to be incredibly down to earth, happy to chat and a really nice guy. I've met a couple of other scholars before who I wasn't that impressed with, but Imam Anwar is*

⁵¹⁷ "Senior Saudi Cleric calls the Mujahideen useless criminal, post # 15 dated 25-07-08 09:03 AM", *Ummah.com / Islamic and Muslim Discussion Forum*, <http://www.ummah.com/forum/showthread.php?178624-Senior-Saudi-Cleric-calls-the-Mujahideen-useless-criminal> (accessed October 19, 2011).

the real deal. I was inspired by his simple manner,"⁵¹⁸ Another reader from Ummah.com also resonated this idea of Awlaki's humility in a thread entitled "*Shaykh Anwar Awlaki - A Message upon release*", it read, "*Tremendous joy upon his release with his fans. Impressed by his humility. 'Humble brother'*"⁵¹⁹ For young Muslims who might feel preachers and academics take an infantilising approach to 'educating' them; the appeal of humility as has been shown by these comments carries enormous persuasive power and should not be underestimated.

What Anwar Awlaki appears to do is the exact opposite of infantilizing. In his lecture, the *battle of the hearts and minds*: Awlaki says,

So we should be more concerned, about what is in the hearts and minds of Muslims rather than what happens on the battlefield! In this area, brothers and sister, praise is to Allah, even though it is true, that many Muslims might be deceived by this plan of the US, there were many Muslims who were asleep before, are probably by now they could be declared brain dead, but on the other hand, it is amazing to see the revival, specially among the youth. The clarity of thought and the maturity of understanding that we find in some youth today is amazing! Specially, if you talk about

⁵¹⁸ "Imam Anwar Al Awlaki in prison!! - myIWC Forums, post # 3 dated 13-11-2006, 22:38", *myIWC - Islamic Web-Community*, <http://www.myiwc.com/forums/showthread.php?t=6818> (accessed October 19, 2011).

⁵¹⁹ Ummah.com thread retrieved from Dark Web portal on 6 September 2011.

some youth in the West, who are second or third generation Muslims, they are carrying on to clear understanding of Islam! It's amazing to see that! ⁵²⁰

If this is compared to traditional Muslim preachers who might talk down to youth, there is a natural attraction to someone who supposedly values their worth and recognises their knowledge and opinions. This is apparently not always the case with traditional imams who follow a dictatorial tradition of instruction and expecting to be obeyed.^{521 522} Likewise Muslim youth might also gravitate to the new breed of extremist Muslim ideologues like Awlaki who can '*speak the same language as them.*' ⁵²³ Likewise Roshonara Choudhry, who stabbed a British Lawmaker, was principally only inspired by Awlaki whom she says, "*explains things really comprehensively and in an interesting way...*"⁵²⁴

Noble qualities are also expounded upon in eulogies given to Jihadists who have been martyred. In the *Ansar Al-Jihad* website, there was a eulogy entitled "*Protectors of*

⁵²⁰ Sheikh Anwar Awlaki, "Sheikh Awlaki: "The Battle of Hearts and Minds" - Kavkazcenter.com", *KAVKAZ CENTER*, <http://kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2009/11/01/11168.shtml> (accessed October 19, 2011).

⁵²¹ "Muslim Teens: How one Imam Changed a Teenager's Life", *Islamic Information & Products - Sound-Vision.com home!*, <http://soundvision.com/Info/parenting/teens/imam.asp> (accessed August 27, 2011).

⁵²² Sakina Gul Hussain, "Muslim Britain", *Islamic Supreme Council of Canada | Home*, <http://www.islamicsupremecouncil.com/muslimbritain.htm> (accessed August 27, 2011).

⁵²³ David Stringer, "Newsvine - Brash and violent: al-Qaida's new mouthpieces", *Newsvine - Get Smarter Here*, http://www.newsvine.com/_news/2011/06/01/6763959-brash-and-violent-al-qaidas-new-mouthpieces (accessed August 28, 2011).

⁵²⁴ *Ibid*

*the Sanctuary*⁵²⁵ which talked about Doctor Arshad Waheed, a Pakistani al-Qaeda leader⁵²⁶. It was apparently written by his wife in a letter to her mother-in-law and mother. The letter gave a human face to the Jihadist when it described how good a family man he was. It also went on to describe how he had given up a life of luxury and comfort for a greater cause, expounding on the life he left behind. It was also meant to shame the reader for their apathy while giving a highly romanticised notion of freedom fighters fighting oppression. But the authenticity of the letter and how much it was doctored by extremists themselves arises when other agendas such as the arrogance of those who preach to the Mujahids is mentioned while praising Dr Arshad's religious piety. This personal account given by his wife who mentioned how she faithfully moved with him to the lands where battles were being fought. She described a romanticized '*noble savage*'⁵²⁷ type of pristine life that was seen in the simplicity of the pious villagers. In many ways this is meant to show the return to honest basics that the Jihadist life offers.

In *Ummah.com*, there was a post called, "*If only I was a Mujahid*" apparently written by a woman,

⁵²⁵ "Ansar al-Mujahideen: {- Surprise Release -} Protectors of the Sanctuary #3 - Martyr Dr. Arshad Waheed (rahimahullah) -- English Translation + Transcript + Letter - A Daughter, A Daughter-In-Law's Letter", Ansar Al-Mujahideen In support of the struggle by pen and sword, <http://www.ansar1.info/showthread.php?t=14722> (accessed October 19, 2011).

⁵²⁶ Bill Roggio, "Pakistani al Qaeda leader killed in March 2008 Predator strike - The Long War Journal", *The Long War Journal*, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/05/pakistani_al_qaeda_1.php (accessed August 27, 2011).

⁵²⁷ "*noble savage*, in literature, an idealized *concept of* uncivilized man, who symbolizes the innate goodness of one not exposed to the corrupting influences of civilization", See Noble Savage (literary concept) -- Britannica Online Encyclopedia", *Encyclopedia - Britannica Online Encyclopedia*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/416988/noble-savage> (accessed August 27, 2011).

Since childhood, in my heart, I have had this wish, this desire, this longing, Oh! If only I was a Mujahid I would keep my trousers above my ankles My face would be decorated with the Sunnah of Rasul Allah (SAW) A middle parting I would have in my hair Upon my shoulder I would carry a rocket launcher and in my hand there would be a Kalashnikov A bomb would adorn my chest and the band of Laa Ilaaha Il Allah would be across my forehead Then, crossing the blood-stained valley I would launch myself into the thick of battle Shouting Allahu Akbar I would attack His enemies Each of them I would eliminate, one by one, avenging the blood of my Shaheed brothers I would free the weak from tyranny and oppression. Yes! This is the Mujahid I would be! A Mujahid who would pile up the bodies of the enemy, like Khalid Bin Walid (ra) Who would shatter the idols, like Mahmood Ghazanwi Who would burn the ships on the seashore, like Tariq Bin Zayad Who would battle against the crusaders like, Salaahuddin Ayyubi And then... fighting Jihad, I would become Shaheed..... But, Alas! This cannot be! For, a lion-hearted, Mujahid warrior I am not In fact...I am a fragile woman.” In the discussion thread that followed one of the readers wrote

back, “Such Chivalry and Bravery the mujahideen hold
within their noble heart...⁵²⁸

We can clearly see a romantic notion of ‘kingthood’ in this account. In relation to this, it describes how the Jihadist is a ‘hero’ who fights *‘tyranny and oppression.’*

At times there is historical reference to heroic characters from Islam’s past and not always to the jihadists of today. A frequently cited character is Khalid ibn Al-Waleed, a companion of the Prophet known for his conquests, military skills and tactics. His poetic vision of battle glory is seen in this ancient quote written by Khalid ibn Al-Waleed that was featured on the Clearguidance forums,

I reached every possible place for Shahadah, but it was written in my fate that I should die on my bed. In my opinion there is no deed more dearer than my waiting with my horse and shield in the darkness of night, the sky to be glittering due to the rain, waiting for the onset of dawn, so that I can attack the enemy.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁸ "If Only I Was A Mujahid", Ummah.com / *Islamic and Muslim Discussion Forum*, <http://www.ummah.com/forum/showthread.php?40221-If-Only-I-Was-A-Mujahid%85%85%85%85> (accessed October 19, 2011).

⁵²⁹ "Post dated 03-22-2003 07:52 PM ", *clear guidance archived discussion forums*, http://clearguidance.blogspot.com/2003_03_16_archive.html (accessed October 19, 2011).

This poetic vision of a Muslim savior and the need to liken him to any of the militant leaders today can be seen in this quote that appeared on the *Qoqaz* website about deceased Chechnyan Militant leader, Ibn Abdul Khattab, “*..Khattab has been likened by many Muslims as the 'Khalid bin Waleed of our times.*”⁵³⁰ Thus in many ways this is the ‘noble’ knight idea that many extremist narratives use to appeal to readers who envision themselves in the same fashion.

The apparently altruistic and selfless values of Jihadists are also exemplified in this quote that appeared on the website ‘Jihad Unspun’ It is meant to demonstrate how Jihadists are not in it for power and personal gratification (unlike the lackeys of the West and states that support them) and therefore their words must be trustworthy:

The Mujahideen aren't students of power and don't compete for power like others do. We are students of truth and work for establishing this truth and for this cause we sacrifice our power. Indeed we have abandoned power and as Ameer ul Mu'mineen has said, if we only had wanted the power, we would have accepted America's demands and America wouldn't have only restrained from waging a war but it would have also supported us with money and men and with everything necessary to remain in power just like

⁵³⁰ Website “ <http://www.qoqaz.net/html/chechnyaprofkhattab.htm> ” no longer exists, comment can also be seen at: "Greatest muslim warrior of 20th century [Archive] - myIWC Forums, post dated 29-05-2001, 03:05", *myIWC - Islamic Web-Community*, <http://www.myiwc.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-1660.html> (accessed October 19, 2011).

all regimes in the Islamic world. However we refused the power that serves the American and crusaders...⁵³¹

For any reader who has been disillusioned by untrustworthy leaders or with state institutions that have never been truthful, the value of honesty that arises from people who are supposedly not in it for personal gain or power is very attractive.

Extremist narratives thus make it a point to directly confront any notion or criticism that shows them to be in it for personal gains. There is a great need to maintain this 'selfless noble values' front. In the shut down website, *'The ignored puzzle pieces of knowledge'* by Samir Khan⁵³², this quote appeared,

...Dr. Khalid Abou al-Fadl⁵³³ criticizing the Mujaahideen - as if he knows them - assuming that they fight on the battlefield for materialistic gains of the next life, such as the Hoor al-'Ayn, instead of fighting purely for Allah's sake. Without giving much attention to this fool, we simply ask

⁵³¹ Website no longer exists, text can also be accessed at: "Interview with Mullah Omar", <http://devoted.to/Allah>, <http://4-islam.blogspot.com/2002/08/respected-brothersister-in-islam.html> (accessed October 19, 2011).

⁵³² He was formerly the editor of the Al-Qaeda magazine *Inspire*. Together with Anwar Awlaki, he was killed in a US drone attack in September 2011. Jennifer Griffin, "Two U.S.-Born Terrorists Killed in CIA-Led Drone Strike | Fox News." Fox News - Breaking News Updates | Latest News Headlines | Photos & News Videos. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2011/09/30/us-born-terror-boss-anwar-al-awlaki-killed/> (accessed May 14, 2012).

⁵³³ Biography of Dr Kahlid, see "Khaled Abou El Fadl", *UCLA School of Law*, <http://www.law.ucla.edu/faculty/all-faculty-profiles/professors/Pages/khaled-abou-el-fadl.aspx> (accessed August 27, 2011).

him: Have you opened up their hearts and have seen what they actually fight for...?⁵³⁴

Here the argument is meant to counter the common criticism that extremists fight for silly beliefs which are ultimately materialistic. I.e. the idea of being with 72 virgins in heaven when they are martyred. Instead they counter that theirs is a noble cause for the sake of God alone. Extremist narratives stress on the idea that there is no material reward in what they do nor do they do it for their leader no matter how noble he is but purely for the pleasure of God alone. All actions of the militants are couched in the language of ‘*Tawhid.*’ (The ‘oneness’ of God). This is a religious concept all mainstream Muslims identify with and see as being the core tenant of Islam. Thus when pitched via a concept all Muslims agree upon, other ideas including extremist ones become persuasive.

The apparent patience and calmness of extremist Muslims is another virtue that is touted. In this same website, these virtues were emphasised on by their supporters and invited readers to see a video debate that proved their point. It was quoted,

This a video debate between the Shaykh, ‘Abdullah al-Faisal⁵³⁵ (hafidhullah) and a Christian. Like usual, the Mus-

⁵³⁴ Website no longer exists, last accessed 6 September 2011, The Ignored Puzzle Pieces of Knowledge, Dār at-Tibyān Sisters:: Benefit of the Day Magazine (6th Issue): Ramadaan November 26, 2007.

⁵³⁵ Dr Jarret Brachman is a renowned counter terrorism specialist and in his website he cites, “*Abdullah al-Faisal, when compared to the previous generation of fire-breathing Western clerics (Abu Hamza al-Masri and Abu Qatada, for instance) is a light-weight. In fact, there’s a great video of Abdullah al-Faisal getting pwned (sic) by Abu Qatada in a debate. The point is, however, that he is still highly influential because, in large part, he offers a much simpler approach. Whereas the big guns like Abu Qatada made multilayered*”

lims tear apart the Christians and make them look stupid and illogical. That's exactly what happens here. Falsehood has no chance against the Truth. May Allah hasten the descension of 'Isa ('alayhis salaam) so that he can break the Cross and kill the swine! A point to note is the Sabr of the Shaykh. Compare it to the Kaafir. The Shaykh shows patience, calmness, and all the same time, eloquence coupled with strength in evidences. The Kaafir, on the other hand, shows his anger, impatience and backwardness.⁵³⁶

These virtues apparently have video evidence in which they are demonstrated. Extremist supporters here also intend to prove to readers that extremist ideologues are equally able to argue just as rationally and convincingly as any Western academic.

In the Chechnyan resistance website *Kavkaz*, the appeal of 'sincerity' as a virtue that can only be seen in adversity and not by armchair leaders and critics was emphasized. There was an article in this website by a Sheikh Sayeed of Buriatia entitled: "*How I went*

ideological arguments. Anwar al-Awlaki and Abdullah al-Faisal present very clear, concise and direct behavioral guidance for their adherents. It's what I've been calling, "Jihad for Dummies.." The problem with this assertion is that while he correctly recognizes what the findings in this study demonstrate, he has not made the connection to how this is indicative of epistemic and instrumental rationality in the narratives of Muslim extremists. See Jarret Brachman, "Jihad For Dummies", Shaykh Abdullah al-Faisal | JARRET BRACHMAN", JARRET BRACHMAN, <http://jarretbrachman.net/?p=311> (accessed August 27, 2011).

⁵³⁶ Website no longer exists, Accessed on 6 September 2011, "Debate on Christianity between Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Faisal & Christian, Posted by inshallashaheed in : Debates, True Shuyūkh, Videos."

to Jihad and what I have seen here”⁵³⁷ that showcases how this virtue can only be seen by those who go through hardship as the Mujahideen do:

I learned that those people who are here, and I don't have any doubt about it, are the best from today's Muslims, because when you are inside a warm house, with plenty of food and good nutrition you will never realize whether a person is truthful or he is a hypocrite. And when cold, dirt and ordeals start, when there is no food, when you have to carry heavy load, only then Allah shows those who were right and those who were wrong.

A quote from this same narrative that went onto praise the militant Chechnyan leader Umarov, “...and I see in him sincerity, the kind of which I rarely saw among the people. He has firm resolve and strong intention, and he demonstrated it when Chechen infidels, apostates abducted his elderly father and said him to surrender, and he refused,....” Thus we see again how it is not about the leader’s charismatic authority that appeals per se but rather the deeds that testify to his character. i.e. Umarov in this case living like the others do, unrelenting and steadfast despite oppression etc. A point to note, in this narrative the word ‘sincerity’ is cited often. (6 times in this one page narrative!)

⁵³⁷ "Sheikh Sayeed of Buriatia: "How I went to Jihad and what I have seen here" - Kavkazcenter.com", KAVKAZ CENTER, <http://kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2008/11/25/10342.shtml> (accessed October 20, 2011).

One of the core ideological texts for al-Qaeda was written by Abu Bakr Naji in his work entitled *'The Management of Savagery.'*⁵³⁸ Here he wrote,

In the beginning, we stressed that our battle is a battle of tawhid against unbelief and faith against polytheism and it is not an economic, political, or social battle. However, we must not forget that part of sharia politics is to address those who have weak souls among the different classes of people with the promise of reclaiming our money and our rights, or rather plundering the money of God which evil people have taken....Afterwards, it is clear that these weak souls improved their condition by living among the people of faith and the furnace of battle, and their motivation was for the sake of tawhid before all else.⁵³⁹

What is happening here is that Naji is connecting the need for altruism with winning over those Muslims whose concerns and grievances are more material. The point here is that while one of the central themes in extremist Muslim narratives is about the virtues and noble character of jihadists, there is a sense of practicality in their strategy that requires them to address the concerns of those who have less of such ideals. By

⁵³⁸ Abu Bakr Naji, "The Management of Savagery by Abu Bakr Naji", *Institute of Communications Studies - University of Leeds*, <http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/vp01.cfm?outfit=pmt&folder=1087&paper=2800> (accessed October 20, 2011).

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 114

doing this, they eventually hope to bring them around to identify with their higher order virtues. This is something that Naji feels needs to be done by ‘*Education by Exhortation*’⁵⁴⁰ which requires the use of *Stories and Analogies* as most people irrespective of their intellectual background can relate to this. This preferred communicative mechanism among extremists is also employed by Anwar Awlaki who is famous for using this form of argumentation. In his case he frequently uses stories from Islam’s past.

Naji then talks about ‘*Education by deed and Example.*’ This requires doing ‘noble’ actions that attract individuals to the group, i.e. altruistic, ‘humble’, brave or pious acts. When this is expounded on, people are naturally attracted to these universal ‘good values’ that extremists supposedly exemplify. Naji for example says,

The Companions (may God be pleased with them) were living models and exemplars of patience, fortitude, lofty ambition, courage, and humility along with might, power, and justice. ...Therefore, we should teach the people during action and use every momentous event as a means of connecting them to servitude, obedience, and seeking refuge with God (praise and exalted be He).⁵⁴¹

Thus this form of ‘Education’ or indoctrination especially during momentous events and action during conflict persuade by deeds and not words. This has the power to

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 127

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 129:

‘exemplify’ what extremists are advocating to actual actions on the ground or events that appear to correlate what they are saying. In some ways this is indicative of epistemic rationality that uses ‘corroboration’ by actual incidents or by the actions of members.

One should not mistake this for charismatic authority in its pure sense as Weber might have put it. Weber defined Charismatic authority as “*resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him.*”⁵⁴² In this case, Muslim extremists are referring to the exemplary qualities of the ‘group’ and generally what all its members are seen to demonstrate. Even though we often see them make reference to many such inspirational Jihadist personalities and individuals, it is not always to just one particular individual and not always the leader. The praise is directed towards the noble values the Jihadist naturally espouses.

Maajid Nawaz, an associate of Ed Husain and Director of the Quilliam Foundation, an anti-extremist ideology think tank, was also a former popular and well known leader in the HUT of UK. He described how he became aware of a distinct Islamic identity in his youth when he related to American rappers *who used radical Islamic messages* and the empowerment and identity that Malcolm X brought to African-Americans. Already anti-establishment, he found a connection to the man who introduced him to HUT. This man, he felt could credibly answer all his questions: “*Here was a man who could speak my language, who felt my pain and who most importantly of all could answer my*

⁵⁴² Max Weber, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, *Economy and society: an outline of interpretive sociology*. Vol. 3, (New York: Bedminster), 1968, 215.

questions concerning identity and faith in radically different way. Since Malcolm X, I had never heard Islam presented in this way."⁵⁴³

In the earlier part of the testimony, he talked about the racist violence that he was subjected to in his youth. If we examine his path towards radicalisation, we might be tempted to simply associate the causal factor to marginalization and an identity crisis stemming from racism. But alternatively it may be due to the alignment of personal experiences and the significant encounter described above that inspired the actor. Radical group recruitment at its very foundation may be an alignment in experiences of personal suffering and shared values that inspire them. Sometimes, that more than anything creates movements and mobilizes them.

b. "They want to change Islam to be subservient and passive."

One of the key contemporary protagonists of this view is none other than Anwar Alwaki and Feiz Muhammad. Quite simply, the assertion is that the West finds certain ideas and practices from Islam likely to incite violence and hate against them and hence these need to be reconstructed by 'moderate' Muslims scholars to create a form of Islam that is more passive, accepting and conforming to Western ideals of society, law and governance. A great deal of criticism has been levelled at what is known as the 'sword

⁵⁴³ Maajid Nawaz, "The Roots of Violent Islamist Extremism and Efforts to Counter it", *Testimony of Maajid Nawaz Director of The Quilliam Foundation, London Before the US Senate committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Thursday July 10th 2008*, http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2008_hr/roots.pdf (Accessed Apr 7, 2009)

verses.’ To achieve this form of Islam that is suited to their liking they would require mainstream Muslim scholars to give an interpretation of Islam that the state can accept. This distorted allegation would naturally create anger in mainstream Muslims and the extremists know this.

There was a forum discussion thread on *Kalifah.com* called “*Sufism and the Revival of the Ummah.*” It went on to initially cite how Sufis are not the pacifist form of Islam as might have been assumed. It said,

Throughout history Sufi's have been pivotal in Islamic reform and Jihad. Western foreign policy pundits are desperately employing various styles and means in their strategy to reform Islam and create a ‘new’ secular Islam similar to what happened to Christianity during the ‘Reformation’ period. Much of this campaign is aimed at rewriting Muslim history and attempting to portray modernist interpretations of Islam as well-established Islamic traditions. Those Muslims working to revive Islam according to an independent Islamic agenda what the west calls ‘extremists’ or ‘Islamists’ are portrayed as innovators whose ideas have no basis in Islamic tradition and history.

Rewriting Sufism is one example of this.⁵⁴⁴

Even today, Sufism is encouraged and permitted in especially non-Muslim countries, due to the apolitical stance of many Sufi orders today and their renunciation of worldly affairs, while authentic Islam is classified as “fundamentalism”, radicalism” and “terrorism.”⁵⁴⁵

The comment here is putting it quite directly that the West wants a form of Islam that is pacifist and does not challenge their dominance. So they wish to dictate the type of Islam that is permissible according to their standards and change it. This creates natural indignation among even mainstream Muslims. In many ways just as extremists here are challenging the labels given by the West such as fundamentalist, radical, Islamist and terrorist, they are in fact reciprocally throwing labels back at any Muslim sect that go against their ideology as pacifist lackeys of the West.⁵⁴⁶ Extremists do this while giving a simple ‘catch all’ explanation that theirs is the authentic form of Islam that has been wrongly labelled and vilified. The point here is that while either side can claim to be right, the indignation has empirical validity when mainstream Muslims experience intense scrutiny on their faith and by how Western leaders and academics have openly

⁵⁴⁴ Hassan Abdullah, "Sufism and the Revival of the Ummah", *Khilafah.com - Building a global movement for Khilafah*, <http://www.khilafah.com/index.php/comment/6741-sufism-and-the-revival-of-the-ummah> (accessed October 20, 2011).

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., discussion forum post following this article dated June 30, 2009, nickname “Brotherhood of Believers.”

⁵⁴⁶ A classic dialectical argument.

come forth to say there needs to be a reformation in Islam.⁵⁴⁷ In his lecture, *'The battle for the hearts and minds'* Awlaki takes a direct quote from credible Western sources to leverage on this point:

According to the US news and World report:

"Today Washington is fighting back after repeated missteps since the 911 attacks, the US government has embarked on a campaign of political warfare unmatched, since the height of the cold war. From military psychological operations teams and CIA covert operatives to openly funded media and think tanks, Washington is plowing tens of millions of dollars into a campaign to influence not only Muslim societies but Islam itself."

Now hear this again "The US is trying to change Islam itself!!!". Without any shame, they are openly stating that we have a desire not only to influence the Muslim societies but we want to change the religion itself! Probably at the time of Bani Israel those Rabbis who were changing

⁵⁴⁷ David E. Kaplan, "In an unseen front in the war on terrorism, America is spending millions to counter the hate of radical Islamists - US News and World Report", *US News & World Report | News & Rankings | Best Colleges, Best Hospitals, and more*, <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/050425/25roots.htm> (accessed September 17, 2011).

the book of Allah never dared to say so openly! These, without even hiding it, are saying that we want to change Islam, yes we do!^{548 549}

This indignation that the very basics of Islam are being criticised then becomes a natural point of leverage for extremists to resonate the idea that the West is therefore trying to change Islam. Awlaki then makes it a point to categorically attack every single point in a report published by the RAND Corporation called "*Civil democratic Islam*".⁵⁵⁰ His main focus was the points of recommendation she made on how to defeat extremists and create a moderate form of Islam.

Besides taking direct empirical evidence from Western mainstream (*US Department of Defence, RAND Corporation*) sources that say that they are trying to change Islam, he also equates what 'moderate' Muslims are doing to please the state with what the Jews did to please the Romans in the past. His counterarguments demonstrate the apparently condescending view of Muslims held in these reports which show how

⁵⁴⁸ Sheikh Anwar al Awlaki, "Sheikh Awlaki: "The Battle of Hearts and Minds" - Kavkazcenter.com", *KAVKAZ CENTER*, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2009/11/01/11168.shtml> (accessed October 21, 2011). Sheikh Anwar Al Awlaki, "The Battle of Hearts and Minds. A speech delivered by Sheikh Anwar Al Awlaki", *Minbar of Tawheed and Jihad: Pulpit of Monotheism and Jihad*, www.tawhed.net/dl.php?i=1309092o (accessed October 21, 2011).

⁵⁴⁹ Sheikh Anwar Al Awlaki, "The Battle of Hearts and Minds. A speech delivered by Sheikh Anwar Al Awlaki", *Minbar of Tawheed and Jihad: Pulpit of Monotheism and Jihad*, www.tawhed.net/dl.php?i=1309092o (accessed October 21, 2011).

⁵⁵⁰ Cheryl Benard, "Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, and Strategies | RAND." RAND Corporation Provides Objective Research Services and Public Policy Analysis. http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1716.html (accessed September 17, 2011).

they are infantilised. He cites the arrogance of the West in wanting to impose a brand of Islam that they find acceptable on Muslims. Later he asks, would not anyone get angry when someone tries to change them for the sake of the other party? This is something that people anywhere would feel indignant about. He also tries to show the lack of understanding by the West when he sarcastically cites a RAND articles that suggests giving a questionnaire to Muslims to judge if they are extremists according to their view.

Finally in the Clearguidance forums in a discussion thread called, "*In the First Anniversary of the Blessed Attack*," the writer quotes Abdullah Azzam who said,

They want a religion that is flexible, in agreement with the whims of the Americans. They want a people who are open to all the American whims, and the whims of the Shayateen of man and Jinn. They want 'moderate' people. Those, who do not differ with the West in any opinion. And they lower their heads, to every order that comes to them. It is only fear that Islaam returns again, and now the plot has become large, and the entire world has gathered [against us].^{551 552}

⁵⁵¹"Post title: In the First Anniversary of the Blessed Attack - Part 1, Tuesday, September 03, 2002", *clear guidance discussion forum archives*, http://clearguidance.blogspot.com/2002_09_01_archive.html (accessed October 21, 2011).

⁵⁵² This quote from Abdullah Azzam was also used to demonstrate the idea of double standards in this site: "IslamicAwakening.Com: 11 September Tribute to Innocent Victims of Terrorism", *IslamicAwakening.Com*, <http://www.islamicawakening.com/viewarticle.php?articleID=645> (accessed October 21, 2011).

There is a double meaning in the idea that the West wants to change Islam because they feel threatened by its return to power. One is that it gives a plausible reason for the perceived targeting of Muslims. On the other hand, it is also meant to mobilize Muslims to realise that they are actually powerful and a force to be reckoned with. This creates a sense of worth and empowerment which they might not have felt before.

c. “The culture, mysticism and miracles of Jihad”

Being an ardent follower of an ideology can be a lifestyle onto itself. The jihadi lifestyle can be at times a more pertinent source of attraction than the ideology. The ideological reasons for jihad may constitute only part of the journey towards extremism. The other component is the supposed culture and wonders that Jihadi life offers, which extremists have correctly identified to be especially appealing to potential jihadists.

The al-Qaeda magazine, *Inspire* has sections dedicated precisely to propagating this ‘lifestyle.’ This usually constitutes ‘war stories’ about actual jihadi experiences, reasons for why they joined and the lifestyle they experienced. The sections which do this

⁵⁵³ Again this quote from Abdullah Azzam was also posed in an article written by a discussion member who wanted readers to not give in to the type of moderate Islam that is actually subservient and warned the Muslim scholars (Ulema) to not be apathetic and conform to a state sanctioned form of Islam. See: "An open letter to Islam Channel [Archive] - Ummah.com - Muslim Forum", *Ummah.com | Islamic and Muslim Discussion Forum*, <http://www.ummah.com/forum/archive/index.php/t-186908.html?s=584c2cb1874e0a24931de76319dcf6c1> (accessed October 21, 2011).

have catchy names such as “*The Jihad Times*” or “*What to expect in Jihad*” that reads like a ‘how to’ manual for those who are contemplating joining a jihad. It addresses practical issues such as how to get along with your fellow jihadists, safety tips and advice on how to overcome depressive moods during jihad, loneliness etc. Many of these experiential accounts are exciting and speak of glory in battle. A highly recurrent theme is the presence of miracles actually witnessed in the midst of Jihadi battles, where a few ill equipped jihadists were able to overcome incredible odds through divine miracles. Or about martyr bodies that never rot and in fact smell of ‘*jannah.*’ (Heaven) Mysticism creates appeal to those who feel the supernatural offers more to their mundane existence. Jihad thus becomes the platform from which one can experience the mystical and divine. At times, extremist Muslim narratives portray jihad to be akin to a spiritual journey of fulfillment, re-birth and a life changing experience. Another common theme is the brotherhood experienced among jihadists and the camaraderie they share.

In the forum, *ummah.com*, a discussion thread appeared called “A death of a Mujahid and a death of an apostate” which is meant to comment on a video that compared the reaction of a Jihadi who died to soldiers in similar circumstances from the West:

Subhanallah, many of us would be screaming in pain etc but look at him! -On the authority of Mu'adh ibn Jabal states that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: "He whose last words are 'La ilaha illa-Allah' shall enter Paradise." Here is another video, again the brother is on the verge of

death but isn't crying/screaming in pain like many would be doing. He is obviously bleeding and is being bandaged but is still very calm and reciting the kalimah then at around 20 seconds you see his soul departing. THEN LOOK AT HIS FACE! Allahu akb.⁵⁵⁴

The article '*The fight over the mountains*' by Adnan Muhammad Ali Saigh in Issue 1 of *Inspire* provided an experiential account about the blowing up of the Bamiyan Buddah idols in Afghanistan. Rain immediately pouring down was described as a spiritual sign of heavenly agreement for their actions. There was another account which spoke about warding off an enemy with a single faulty tank shell. Or about large bees which prevented moving of a martyr's body according to his last will. All of which are supposedly indicative of divine intervention. It also talked about the beauty of the Afghan mountains and about scenes of old tribal life. "*10000 goats crossing..Sheppards on horses... "It was reminiscent of the old days of sheparding..."*⁵⁵⁵ This is meant to show the beauty of this kind of experience and that of a noble, beautiful, rural and simpler past that some might yearn for. This is potrayed as being part of the overall Jihadi experience.

In Issue 2 of *Inspire*, there was another experiential narrative called "*My life in Jihad: The story of Commander Uthman al-Ghamidi.*"⁵⁵⁶ This narrative began by talking

⁵⁵⁴ " A death of a Mujahid and a death of an apostate", *Ummah.com / Islamic and Muslim Discussion Forum*, <http://www.ummah.com/forum/showthread.php?233421-A-death-of-a-Mujahid-and-a-death-of-an-apostate> (accessed October 21, 2011).

⁵⁵⁵ *Inspire* Issue 1, 61

⁵⁵⁶ *Inspire* Issue 2, 11-16

about the reasons why he joined jihad. The author explained how he was looking for a sense of purpose and to do good. “*The Muslim Ummah needed more than just relief work and sponsoring orphans and widows. It needed to be saved from the enemies that were surrounding it.*”⁵⁵⁷ It then went onto talking about overcoming obstacles through the help of God. “*With the help of Allah, the mujahidin are able to get over the most difficult of obstacles.*”⁵⁵⁸ For many who feel the wonder in life has been lost or they feel jaded and disillusioned with modern contemporary society, the need to experience this 'lifestyle' and witness such miracles can be a major source of appeal.

The author also talked about the lure of warmth, camaraderie and brotherhood in Jihad. He mentioned how he received a lot more kindness from his fellow jihadists as compared to what he experienced in the Saudi navy.

As for his training, he described it as, “*...the factory where real men were fashioned: the al-Faruq camp.*”⁵⁵⁹ The image of the tough masculine hero is another frame such narratives like to employ. This is coupled together with the need to be something more than what one used to be. There was also emphasis on how jihadists, even when small in numbers, can hit at the powerful. Strong reinforcement of such ideas helps to spur on even bolder attacks. Many extremist narratives which describe battle, frequently cite ‘david vs goliath’ situations where Muslims are triumphant against overwhelming odds.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 11

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 12

The author also talked about his range of experiences from the time he was incarcerated in Guantanamo to the time he was at the receiving end of Saudi counter radicalisation programmes in prison. This experiential debunking of such programmes has the potential to resonate more credibly with readers as it is being related by someone who was actually there. The main criticism is about the superficial arguments used by counter radical preachers. For instance he spoke of how religious scholars who came to 'de-radicalise' him in Saudi prisons failed to argue convincingly when the issue was reduced to simple logic and analogies:

One brother was being advised by this sheik, who told him that 'doa' alone is sufficient and there is no need for jihad. So the brother asked him: If someone comes into your house and wants to rape your wife, would you just make dua and not defend her? "The Shaykh said "Yes, I would make dua and I would say to him: I ask Allah that you do not enjoy her!" These are the shykhs of these rehabilitation programs, the slaves of money⁵⁶⁰

Finally when he rejoined jihad in Yemen, the warm welcome he received felt like liberation. All such accounts of their suffering is not meant to put off readers but to leverage on their sense of altruism and inspire them to come help their fellow Muslims against a common vilified enemy.

⁵⁶⁰ Inspire Issue 1, 16

In *Inspire* issue 2 under 'What to expect in Jihad', the author described Jihad as a life changing experience. "...I was always under the impression that fighting either directly or indirectly was what I would be doing most of the time. The reality is not quite like that. I have realized that living with the mujahideen will actually re-transform one's life style and habits to something that is closer to Allah's pleasure..."⁵⁶¹

This theme is in line with a common graphic advert that appears in *Inspire* that says "Don't cling onto 'Dunya'."⁵⁶² (Worldly life)" This is meant to remind readers to not cling onto material things. In many ways Jihad is portrayed as offering liberation from materialism and anomie. This opportunity to escape from contemporary modern society and transform one's life may be a major source of appeal to some.

In *Inspire* issue 2 Samir Khan wrote a piece called, "I am proud to be a traitor to America." Jihad is described by Khan to being akin to a spiritual odyssey for the purification of the soul and for self discovery. Surrounded by death, it makes one realise the really important things in life. The need to return to basics and to get away from the 'rat race' of modernity is a great source of appeal in his narrative. He alludes to the purity that is found in the path of Jihad that comes from this disassociation with modern, cosmopolitan society and the purification of the soul through hardship in a 'raw' and basic environment while constantly under the shadow of death.

As my eyes passed over the mysterious twirls of the sand

⁵⁶¹ *Inspire* Issue 2, 24

⁵⁶² *Inspire* Issue 1, *Inspire* Issue 2, 41

dunes, I was reminded of the enigma of Jihad in the Contemporary world...”“So being in Jihad makes me focus on my soul's wellbeing for the purpose of being accepted by the Lord of the Worlds since death surrounds jihad although the guarantee of Jihad is not there.

How could I become a traitor to myself by throwing away this holy odyssey? Living with myself would be then be like a fish taken out of water. Thus it brought me gleeful tears and great joy to hear that America labels me a terrorist due to my love for correcting and straightening my soul out for the better. I have become a traitor for chasing my love. What more evidence does one need that America and her allies hate Muslims who want to practice their religion to the very core.⁵⁶³

In this way extremists espouse Jihad to be one of the fundamental components of their religion that is denied to Muslims. Jihad to them has been vilified to become something criminal and therefore hard to attain.

Similarly in Issue 4 of *Inspire*, Abu Zakari Al Eritri wrote another ‘war story’ called the “*The Jihad in Abyan.*” The narrative spoke about exciting successes despite strong odds and how jihadists demonstrated bravery and creativity. It also went on to

⁵⁶³ Inspire Issue 2, 48

relate about divine intervention against close calls, even though they welcomed martyrdom. This was to impress upon the reader that there is actual evidence to show that God is on their side. The impression the narrative also wants to create is the idea that the enemy is not invincible despite common impressions. *“Overall, what I’ve learned from these battles is that the Yemeni soldier, whom I used to think they knew how to fight well, are actually chickens and the only thing they know how to do well is run from the mujahidin and tell lies to the Americans that they captured so-and-so or killed so-and so.”*⁵⁶⁴

In *Inspire* issue 4 the section entitled *“What to expect in Jihad: The Jihad Times,”*⁵⁶⁵ spoke about the internal struggle that will happen in the midst of battle stress. There is the promise of paradise in the midst of fear during bombings. The account being very experiential went into practical details of how to take care during jihad. Again the miracles during jihad were emphasised. Such raw and experiential narratives create an impression of authenticity that is appealing to readers.

d) “Prophecy”

This is in fact related to the earlier theme about the supernatural experiences in Jihad, but focuses on the element of prophetic predictions based on religious scriptures which offer the promise of a better tomorrow to Muslims. When the authenticity of such prophecies gets ‘proven’ by reference to religious scriptures or trusted scholars, they gain credibility with even mainstream Muslims.

⁵⁶⁴ *Inspire* issue 4, 30

⁵⁶⁵ *Inspire* issue 4, 52

Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula in Al-Malahim Media's Seventh Issue of the Magazine *Jihad Publications* featured an article called "...and They Devised Plans and Allah too had Arranged a Plan", written by *Shaykh Nasir al-Wuhaishi* in the *Ansar al Jihad* website. It was targeted at those who believed in the idea that they are in some ways the saviour foretold in religious prophecies who will come to save Islam. It quoted a *hadith* that described how apparently 12000 men will come from Yemen to save Islam:

Out of `Aden-Abyan will come out twelve thousand; they will give victory to Allah and His messenger. They are the best of the people living in the period between my time and theirs.....

...I swear by Allah, this is a holy war that erupted in your land, and in your peninsula, to which you were led and chosen by Allah, so that Islam spreads from where it started, and revive the old days of conquests.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁶ (Original version accessed 6 September 2011 had the article on main page of this address) Present site: *Shaykh Nasir al-Wuhaishi*, " Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula : "and They Devised Plans and Allah too had Arranged a Plan" - Ansar Al-Mujahideen", *Ansar Al-Mujahideen... In support of the struggle by pen and sword*, <http://www.ansar1.info/showthread.php?t=1323> (accessed October 21, 2011).

All this gives readers the opportunity to make a causal link to the rise of al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (Yemen) after the killing of Osama bin Laden.⁵⁶⁷

In the HUT forum discussion thread '*Al-Qaeda Supporters*', a member wrote, "*Muslims must be 'supporters' of those in the Ummah who have the characteristics of the Taifah al-Mansurah described by the Final Prophet (saw). Inshallah trying their utmost to be part of this Party standing shoulder to shoulder with them... and if their Party does not have these characteristics, to strive in order to incorporate these characteristics into it.*"⁵⁶⁸ Here they are putting forth the claim that people is al-Qaeda are in fact the prophesied '*Taifah al-Mansurah*' from the hadith.

Likewise in the *Kavkaz* website under the article, "*Two ideologies can never get along peacefully on the same territory,*" it was written, "*Islamic scholars say that Allah grants the Muslims the conditions for victory once every hundred years. In this century we should like to take advantage of those conditions. We shall try to make it happen in our lifetime.*"⁵⁶⁹ This demonstrates how prophecy represents hope and the promise of victory to the reader. It has the power to create confidence in the reader to any act of resistance as victory is ensured.

⁵⁶⁷ "ICPVTR - International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Counter Terrorist trends and analysis, Vol 3, Issue 6, 6th June 2011", *ICPVTR - International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research*, <http://www.pvtr.org/pdf/CTTA/2011/CTTA-June11.pdf> (accessed August 27, 2011).

⁵⁶⁸ "Al-Qaeda Supporters - Post # 2 dated 05-09-2007, 06:57 PM." Hizb ut-Tahrir Discussion Forum - Powered by vBulletin. <http://forum.hizbuttahrir.org/showthread.php?t=1001&highlight=Supporters> (accessed October 18, 2011).

⁵⁶⁹ ""Two ideologies can never get along peacefully on the same territory" - Kavkazcenter.com", *KAVKAZ CENTER*, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2008/07/26/10023.shtml> (accessed October 21, 2011).

In the classic Jihadist narrative, “*Defense of the Muslim Lands*” by Abdullah Azzam which appeared in the *Sallaifiyah Jadeedah* website, Azzam talked about the “*The First Obligation After Iman*.” In this he mentioned that according to *Hadith*; the time will come when people would hate to fight for Islam for “*Wahn*” (love of this world). There will also be those who discourage them. But only a chosen few will remain true.⁵⁷⁰

Extremists live out this self-fulfilling prophecy which they can relate to as they see themselves as being in the same situation where they are vilified and alienated for wanting to fight in a jihad which many shun from. Much of this narrative is to encourage readers to mentally prepare for the hardships and societal rejection that will follow if they choose such a path. But as has been prophecised, it will be ultimately rewarding for them on the basis of their perseverance and faith.

One of the most common jihadi prophecies has to do with the rise of the *Mahdi*, the prophesised saviour of Islam who will come in the end times. This is an idea that any mainstream Muslim can also identify with. Extremists have used the idea of the rise of the ‘*army of black flags*’ to allude to themselves. The ‘army of the black flags’ is supposedly fortold in the *hadiths*⁵⁷¹ by the prophet Muhammad and other established Islamic

⁵⁷⁰ Abdullah Azzam, “Defence of the Muslim Lands, “The First Obligation After Iman”, Part 1”, *sallaifiyah-jadeedah: Fake Salafi Refutations*, http://.tripod.com/Qital/Part_1.htm (accessed October 21, 2011).

⁵⁷¹ References cited in quote from website article, Joel Richardson, “The Islamic Antichrist the Shocking Truth About the Real Nature of the Beast.Chapter Four: The Mahdi: Islam’s Awaited Messiah”, *Answering Islam*, http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/JR/Future/ch04_the_mahdi.htm (accessed August 26, 2011).

sources. It revolves around a Muslim army that will arise from *Khorasan* (present day Iran or Central Asia) that will follow the Mahdi to reconquer Jerusalem and restore the status of Islam. What is remarkable is that the the writer apparently saw evidence of this belief entrenched among everyday Muslims,

I was once talking to a group of young Muslim men and asking them some questions. I asked them if the obvious superior militaries of America and Israel compared to the militaries of any Islamic nations were a source of difficulty for many Muslims. One of these men then became very angry at my question and snapped out, “You Americans and Zionists better get ready, because the black flags are coming!” At the time, I had no idea what he was talking about. Later I learned the meaning.

The idea of the Army of the Black Flags also appears in extremist websites. In the ‘*Gawaher*’ Islamic forums, a reader cites a comprehensive research paper on this prophecy which indicated where the army of the black flags will rise from. The author also wanted to show how current developments in the world inductively point to this prophecy being true,

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1. Kabbani, p. 231
 2. Abu Nu’aym and As-Suyuti, related by Thawban, as quoted by Izzat and Arif, p. 44
 3. *Flags of The Islamic State*, <http://www.islamic-state.org/resources/flags-of-the-islamic-state.html>
 4. Ibn Kathir, *The Beginning and the End*, vol.2, pt. 3, p.288 as quoted by Mark A. Gabriel, *Jesus and Muhammad* (Lake Mary, Charisma house, 2004), p. 60
 5. Tirmidhi as quoted by Mohammed Ali Ibn Zubair Ali, *Signs of Qiyamah* (Islamic Book Service, New Delhi, 2004), p. 42 and Prof. M. Abdullah, *Islam, Jesus, Mehdi, Qadiyanis and Doomsday*, (Adam, New Delhi, 2004), p. 54

In all these ethnic groups, there are only two groups that are Muslims and only one group that is geographically present in Khurasan i.e. the Pathans of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The only group that is warlike, undefeated and untamed throughout the course of history, staunch in religious fervor, filled with honor and pride and is unforgiving of its enemy; one that will fight its enemy until one of them is dead. One now starts to understand why Afghanistan is the center of the world and why Pakistan became Independent of United India? God has His own ways of making histories and turn fates.”

...Not very surprisingly, if one identifies US or Allied bases in the Central Asian and Middle East region, one would realize that the Allied powers have shockingly circled Syria i.e. the host of the last war of the world....

...The US's War on Terror is a deceptive game and a mind boggling riddle. The term terrorism is itself vague and undefined and built on repetitive lies upon lies as evident in the case of 9/11. It is almost always blindly used against Muslims. The unilateral, pre-emptive extra-judicial violence by the western powers is always named as wars of democracy and freedom.

But if one makes an unbiased examination of the term and the war itself then one would realize that all these terrorists demand is the right of self-determination and self-rule and their wars of insurgencies are nothing but wars of self-defense against foreign occupational forces and aggressors against their land, sovereignty and religion.

...It is also imperative to understand that, unlike Ronald Reagan or evangelical Christians, no Muslim can be sure of End of times and the time of appearance of Imam Mehdi and second coming of Jesus Christ (AS). We shall only look into these critical state or non-state players in the region considering the American and Jewish mentality of preparation of the last war, and to realize what important Muslim players are there who pose a vital threat to Western interests....

....Very interestingly, Al Qaeda has a black flag as well with a yellow/orange Shahada embossed on it. According to Syed Saleem Shehzad of Asia Times Online, Al Qaeda

shares this belief with the Taliban that Afghanistan is the promised land of Bilad-e-Khurasan.⁵⁷²

The author of the research paper was clearly sympathetic to extremist Muslim organizations. But he had done a highly comprehensive and well referenced academic research paper that gives a rational analysis of the idea of the Army of the Black Flags. In short he alludes to major militant groups such as Al-Qaeda or politically activist but extremist groups such as HUT and a few others as possible contenders for the Army of the Black Flags. But the main emphasis of his article is on how military intervention or hawkish, jingoist policies of the West and their occupation and interference in Muslim lands will give rise to this prophecy being fulfilled as historically provable facts discovered and events cited in his paper, all point to it. Such narratives have the capacity to be very persuasive as they argue the case in a rational, corroborative and coherent manner. Judging from this, it is very easy to make a simplistic connection between the prophesized Army of the Black Flags and almost any militant Muslim organization, be it al-Qaeda in Afghanistan or to militant groups in Iran. Not only does the theme of divine prophecy have the capacity to create confidence and inspiration, it more importantly gives religious legitimacy to any of their actions. Any terrorist act then becomes part of a greater prophecy already ordained by God.

⁵⁷² "Latest Article About The Black Banner Army From Khurasan - Islamic Forum", *Islamic Forum*, <http://www.gawaher.com/index.php?showtopic=726437.html&> (accessed October 21, 2011).

e. **“We represent grassroots concerns”**

People Power. This is what al-Qaeda and other extremist movements claim they have - the support of the grassroots. Grassroots in the context of extremist narratives is meant to refer to Muslim communities, be they as diasporas in the US, Europe or other nations where they constitute the minority, or as part of the majority in Muslim nations across the world. Local grievances are naturally distinct from nation to nation. Extremist narratives carefully pitch their narratives to bring across the idea of the Global ‘*Ummah*’ to create the idea that the concerns of a Muslim in any part of the world are relatively similar and with equally similar origins. These similar issues relate mainly to being subjugated, marginalized and alienated by the non-Muslims and Muslims who are their lackeys. In some ways they are making their appeals to a kind of global Islamic ‘grassroots.’ But they also make it a point to pitch to the specific local grievances of the nation in question. Whether it is the third generation Muslim in the United States or someone in a Middle East nation living under an authoritarian regime, extremists frame their narratives tactically at these two levels – the global and the local.

There are three principal ideas regarding grassroots concerns such extremist narratives need to convince readers of. One is that they have correctly identified and are much attuned to the grievance of the grassroots in question. Grievances which have been misconstrued, marginalized or simply ignored for greater state interests. The second idea is that the masses actually resonate the views and actions of extremist groups. Extremist narratives do this by showing instances in both speech and action by which the masses

support their ideas. For instance, in “*Signs of ar-Rahman in the Jihad of Afghanistan*”⁵⁷³ by Abdullah Azzam he spoke about how Afghan people were selling their meager possessions to buy weapons for Mujahedeen. “...*I witnessed an Afghan selling his goat and sheep to buy a single round of ammunition.*”⁵⁷⁴ Likewise the dissent in the 2011 Arab revolution which saw the overthrow of Mubarak and Ben Ali has been linked to show how the grievances cited by al-Qaeda has resonated with the masses.

This gave readers the impression that they are not alone and that there is populist Muslim support for the ideas they are reading. These readers in the forums mutually reinforce such ideas to create the self-fulfilling notion of a community of supporters. Finally, extremist narratives pitch the idea that they are akin to a lighthouse for the masses as they warn the masses about the insidious intentions the West and its ability to keep the Muslim grassroots docile and misled.

Evidence of al-Qaeda capitalizing on this strategy of capturing the label of being the champion for the Muslim grassroots can be seen in how it came up with a special issue in ‘*Inspire*’ dedicated purely to the recent Arab revolutions. The entire issue was entitled the ‘*Tsunami of Change*.’⁵⁷⁵ In the article, “*The way forward*” by Abu Suhail featured in this Inspire Special Edition, the author quotes, “*It (Arab Civil Protests) has also proved that al Qaeda’s rage is shared by the millions of Muslims across the world*

⁵⁷³ Abdullah Azzam , "Signs of ar-Rahman in the Jihad of Afghanistan", *hoor-al-ayn.com*, www.hoor-al-ayn.com/Books/Signs_of_ar-Rahman.pdf (accessed September 6, 2011).

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 62:

⁵⁷⁵ Inspire Issue 5

whether they are in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Yemen or elsewhere.”⁵⁷⁶ This is meant to portray to readers that there is alignment in the grievances of the masses and that of Al-Qaeda’s.

Likewise Awlaki in his article the *‘Tsunami of Change’*, counters the claim that al-Qaeda has failed because of the success of the Arab revolution. He retorted back by highlighting that al-Qaeda got the same thing they wanted all along for the masses, namely, their freedom.

But this idea of victory is extrapolated towards what al-Qaeda wants the masses to see as a real victory – a government ruled by Sharia. In his article, *“The overlooked Backdrop”*, Zawahiri starts casting this doubt, *“It is a new government that gives the people minor aspects of freedom, slight reforms and the freeing of some detainees with bails for a period of time. However, holding the reins of the government’s rule remains in the hands of America’s representatives, agents and soldiers...”*⁵⁷⁷

With regards to the Egyptian protest leader, al-Barada’ai, Zawahiri highlights the fact that he only showed up well into the protests and was not really there for the people in the midst of their suffering by being overseas and pandering to the West to provide him legitimacy and favour. In sum, what he is implying is that the protesters are replacing one lackey for the West with another. Although there might be placatory and superficial freedoms at the onset, it is a ruse as things will be no different eventually. Only the Islamic state solution of al-Qaeda will entail ‘true’ liberation. He entrenches this notion

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., 43

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid, 38

by citing how al-Qaeda is with the people in the midst of their suffering.

...And that is exactly what America wants from Egypt; they want either a tyrannical government or a democratic one that is ruled by one party or many, clashing with each other in succession to rule. However the threads of the game remain always in the hands of the American ambassador whose armies are positioned in Ras Banat, the Western airport of Cairo...⁵⁷⁸

He thus brings in empirical ‘evidence’ demonstrated by American military presence to show how power is still indirectly in the hands of Americans and not their new leaders. The democracy of the sort the Americans want is a ploy to keep their control over Muslims. They want the ‘in-fighting’ that would feature when there is a clash to rule. The West wants Arabs to stay disunited and confused over who should rule them. This ‘confusion’ will allow them to exercise better control.

The ideology here is that Islam is the only overarching solution that will guarantee unity and ‘justice’ and secular government / ruling systems are a tool to retain control over Muslims and keep them divided. The rational argumentation logic to support this claim employs citing observable empirical evidence of US intervention and presence in neighbouring areas and in Egypt. This issue of *Inspire* also puts in a quote from a Western academic to corroborate their idea that the West will still try to rule by proxy through

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., 38

military and civil intervention. They cite Phil Rhee who says that the rebirth happening in the Middle East will become anti-Western if the West is seen as interfering.⁵⁷⁹

In this same issue, Shaykh Ibrahim al-Rubaish wrote an article called, “*Al – Saud: Lodging a Criminal.*” A quote from this narrative says,

But I don’t think that this will help the situation of the Muslims because oppression won’t disappear and a *ṭaghut* is often substituted by another. Rather it will be replaced by lesser oppression because of slight reforms like some aspects of freedom and increases of income. However the shari’ah isn’t implemented and manmade laws are worshipped besides Allah.⁵⁸⁰

Again reinforcing the idea that until Shariyah and an Islamic government is implemented, Muslims are simply replacing one oppressive apostate tyrant for another with marginal and superficial improvements to mislead them from realising the extent of their oppression and keep them quiet.

Indonesian Jihadis are also evolving with new perspectives coming from the Middle East. In this case taking inspiration from the works of *Hazim a-Madani*, *Abu Musab Al-Suri* and *Al-Maqdisi* in a local Malay article called *Visi Politik Gerakan Jihad.*

⁵⁷⁹ Inspire Issue 5, 7.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 47

(Political Vision of the Islamic Movement). This article highlights the fallacy of painting all Jihadi writings as having recommended solutions that reduce the solution to straightforward militancy. It suggests that there are discerning Jihadi ideologues that advocate probing more deeply into the socio political context of proposed solutions. This entails looking into the primacy of winning grassroots support on local issues that the populace can identify with. For instance, this can be the growing concern over the proliferation of vice, narcotics etc. It stresses on the importance of doing a ‘cost / benefit’ calculation over proposed actions, how public opinion will react and support it, how the ‘enemy’ can be rationally delegitimized and most importantly having a well thought out strategy that encompasses sound political analysis. This is a move that is contrary to the idea that religious dictates are the sole or primary ideological force to determine solutions; it recognizes that quoting Quranic verses to support the argument to use violence is not enough.⁵⁸¹

If we bring in America and Israel as the enemy, we’re not channelling or empowering the potential of the Islamic resistance very well, because America and Israel are too far from the reality of the ummah (Muslim community). Because of this, the ummah must be mobilized to crush Ahmadiyah, Shi’ism, vice, gambling, narcotics, idolatry

⁵⁸¹Hazim a-Madani dan Abu Musab al-Suri, *Visi Politik Gerakan Jihad* (Solo, 2010), p. vi. & *Visi Politik Gerakan Jihad*, op. cit., p. 35 and “*Refleksi Jihad Aceh*”, cited in International Crisis Group, “INDONESIAN JIHADISM: SMALL GROUPS, BIG PLANS”, *International Crisis Group: Asia Report N°204*, 19 April 2011, [www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/204%20Indonesian%20Jihadism%20%20Small%20Groups%20Big%20Plans.ashx](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/204%20Indonesian%20Jihadism%20%20Small%20Groups%20Big%20Plans.ashx) (accessed August 26, 2011), 10.

and other things that are closer to their daily lives. By opposing these things, the ummah will experience clashes, and from the clashes, larger conflicts that will produce solidarity and brotherhood. Then we will become ever stronger until we become a clear social force.⁵⁸²

Finally Husain mentions that when HUT activists spoke in Universities it was on topics that were considered taboo by traditional mosque authorities and which were swept under the carpet by their families. This was ideal for recruitment as the *“First generation of British Born Muslims were now in university in large numbers and suffered from common problems that the Hizb tapped into.”*⁵⁸³

These issues range from marriage, discrimination, the social party culture and the place of Muslims in it. Once HUT activists found identification with the audience over such personal issues in a very jovial and informal manner, they would link them to broader global issues and politics. Every issue, such as not being offered a prayer room, was politicised and the activists were trained to do this. The authorities, like school management were then villainised. UK foreign policy was another favourite punching bag.⁵⁸⁴ Then the idea of the Islamic state in which there would be no racism would be presented as the solution to such grassroots concerns.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸² *“Pergolakan Arab dalam Perspektif Muqowamah”*, 9 March 2011. This article, by the same author as *“Refleksi Jihad Aceh”*, first appeared on <http://elhakimi.wordpress.com> and was picked up by the larger circulation site, www.annah.com on 10 March 2011”, this citation appeared in *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, 106

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 141

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 107

g. “You can never fit in.”

One of the strongest themes to create emotive resonance is the idea that Muslims will always be marginalised and alienated because of their religion. Even if they were to conform by showing flexibility in adhering to Islamic practices or by recontextualising practices to make them more acceptable in a secular society, it would still not be good enough. They will be hated and will never be accepted. So extremists build their argument from this foundational basis and then propose that being true to their faith entails pleasing God and not secular man. This will at least ensure them ultimate victory in the hereafter and dignity in the present. But this dignity in the present will come at a price. The divine injunction to be faithful to God is not just about being firm but also to resist the imposition of secular ideas in all aspects of life that Muslims will experience. For secular ideas violate the absolute submission to God and his decrees for man-made ones. This ranges from issues of governance entailing Western notions of democracy to societal living among the rest of a nation’s secular population. This theme of never fitting in resonates especially with Muslim youth who might feel they need to ‘fit in’ by not making their ‘Muslimness’ very obvious. Be it conforming by drinking alcohol and not wearing a headscarf to more major issues such as conforming to Western notions of democracy and all that it entails. Extremist narratives cite examples that many of these youth might have gone through. They apparently prove their point by asking the fundamental question of whether they still feel accepted despite compromising and conforming. For many Muslim minority populations throughout the world, there will be a

portion of youth whose answer to this question is a flat ‘no.’ The actual reasons for this may be varied but this is the precursory experiential alignment such extremist narratives hope to leverage on.

In the Muslim discussion forum, *MyIWC* a thread discussing the article, “*Now That the Elections are Over*” by Anwar Awlaki appeared.⁵⁸⁶ A member wrote,

Brothers and sisters you can vote, you can run around supporting the campaigns, you can stay silent about the aspects of your religion that do not appeal to your fellow citizens, you can speak out against your Muslim brothers and sisters who support the Muslim causes around the world, you can try your best to fit in and be accepted and the end result will be that you will always be seen as the enemy and you will never be accepted unless you do one thing: give up your religion.

One of the characteristics of a humiliated and oppressed community is their submission to their oppressor and their tolerance of oppression. On the other hand they are arrogant and intolerant among themselves. This is how it was with Banu Israel when living under the Pharaoh. I am sorry to state this but unfortunately this attitude is been

⁵⁸⁶ "Now That the Elections are Over by anwar awlaki - myIWC Forums", *myIWC - Islamic Web-Community*, <http://www.myiwc.com/forums/showthread.php?t=8121> (accessed October 21, 2011).

reflected by many American Muslims who humiliated themselves by voting for candidates who have no serious concern for their issues. I mentioned in my previous post: The perception the American Muslims are giving is that by giving them nothing substantial and by giving them just a little bit of recognition you can get their support, vote and loyalty even if you carry on your war against their brothers and sisters. Just like a dog owner abusing his dog but as long as the bone is thrown out the dog will still give his owner all his loyalty. It is sad but true. The American Muslims who decided to vote have made a fool out of themselves and the whole world knows it.

Again we see the deference to an experiential perspective some American Muslims might be inclined to identify with, to illustrate the indignity in which Muslims live where they are mentally defeated and subservient. A number of other comments resonate this point of secular processes such as democracy being a sham and efforts to include Muslims being superficial in nature:

If they didn't even bother to visit a mosque, which is no more than a ceremonial thing anyway but does make the house Negroes happy, how can one expect from them any support on our issues?

Proven by those who do not want to vote. Sayed Qutb, Dr.

Israr Ahmad, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, and the Salafi Jihadi movement. In Yemen prominent scholars from the Muslim Brotherhood have finally come to the conclusion that the democratic process is no more than a game that wastes the efforts of Muslims with very little gain.

Muslims will be allowed to pray, fast, and practice Islam as long as it is contained within the spiritual compartment. But they will not be allowed to be Muslim in the full sense of the word. The issues of Sharia law, Jihad, wala and bara, hudud, khilafah, the Quranic teachings concerning the Jews and Christians, and support of Muslim resistance fighters around the world will not be tolerated. Now the spiritual aspect will also be under attack, probably not by the government but by the society at large. The American culture will destroy their families.

Readers might we see this as real and happening if dissent by Muslims is viewed with suspicion and gauged firstly for its propensity for extremism.

There is a striking similarity between the American Muslim community and the Muslims of al Andalus who chose to stay behind after Muslim Spain fell into the hands of the Catholic monarchs. There are some writings that reveal that after all the oppression they suffered they still had hope that

their situation would improve, even after the Catholic monarchs showed them the worst treatment.

Again we see the association with a historical incident and its similarity to today's events, attempting to give credibility to the argument on the basis that 'history repeats itself'. The point stressed is that Muslims throughout history have never been able to fit in even if they went along with those who rule them.

There are rebuttals on the forum. There are those that claim that Awlaki's arguments are flawed because they are 'weak arguments' and they challenge each of his claims by producing counter claims in the form of questions. E.g. "*if a person feels this way, why are they still in this country?*" and ridiculing the attitude expressed, i.e. they Muslims '*pout like a baby*' when they do not get what they want or that their grievances are the same as any other American. "*Where is the oppression of Muslims in this country that the author is crying about?*" This remark would have received numerous rebuttals if not for the following possible reasons:

1. Awlaki's responses are leading and based on questions that one cannot disprove without extensive research on public perceptions.
2. A post mentioned that the forums are being monitored and contain *hidden agents of disinformation*. Any person who critiques Awlaki falls neatly into this category and would be ignored or avoided for this reason.
3. Also the question, "*Where is the oppression ...?*" is practically inviting those with grievances to spill the beans. But again the warning given that the forum is being moni-

tored effectively thwarts further unbiased forum comments. Thus killing off the Habermasian *'Ideal Speech Situation'* that might have existed in the forum.

To prove the extent of Islamophobia, al-Qaeda in *Inspire* Issue 1: "*Newsflash*" cites the example of Molly Norris's facebook entry, "*everybody draw Mohamed day.*" It has over 100 000 members. The aim behind quoting such incidents was to provide empirical corroboration to prove there is a 'war on Islam' and that the 'West hates Islam.' It also entrenches extremist notions of *Al Walla Wal Barra* and the idea that Muslims will never be accepted in the West so there is no point in trying to integrate with the 'enemy.'

In *Inspire* issue 1 another article appeared entitled, "*The West should ban the Niqab covering its real face*" by Yahya Ibrahim. It was meant to show the hypocrisy and double standards of the West that claims to champion human rights but is highly intolerant towards its Muslim population. He sarcastically attacks Sarkozy's quote on the symbolic dangers of the *burqa*⁵⁸⁷ by saying, "*This is quite a lot to pile on top of this garment...*" He then says, "*As mentioned above the Niqab is not mandatory on Muslim Women according to many scholars. But because it is a right of Muslim Women and because it has become a symbol of being Muslim today, Muslims must take a firm position in this battle and dig in their trenches.*" Here we again see how extremists use the same argument the West uses against them, i.e. the *Burqa* issue is now about the right of women to choose what they want to wear. Thus extremists when it suits their arguments will revert to universal values and those which the West can identify with to

⁵⁸⁷ Full body veil used by some Muslim women.

garner credibility to their argument. The main issues being highlighted here are about resistance, the right not to be told how one should practice their religion and not being forced to ‘fit in’:

For this reason we promote that Muslim Women in the West who do not view wearing niqab as being a religious duty to wear the niqab as a sign of their rejection of forced assimilation, as a symbol of their pride at being a Muslim, as a public statement that is carried as a badge of honour in face of a decadent Western way of life, and a statement that proclaims that even if I am not obliged to wear the niqab, I will wear it because I refuse to have the West decide for me how I am going to practice my religion.

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As demonstrated by the above comment, the symbolic fight over the *niqab*⁵⁸⁹ is not simply over the need to defend religious practices. We might assume that extremists advocate and feel very strongly about the need to wear the niqab because they follow puritan ideas of Islam. On the contrary, here they publically cite how the *niqab* has become a symbol of resistance and they are aware of that there is discretion, flexibility and choice in Islam over the need to wear it. The implications of this are that we need to frame counter-extremist narratives to take the focus away from escalating the niqab to the

⁵⁸⁸ Inspire issue 1, “*The West should ban the Niqab covering its real face*” by Yahya Ibrahim, P19

⁵⁸⁹ Same as *burqa*.

ideological arena of extremists. There is a need for counter narratives to confine the issue of the *niqab* within the religious sphere and not allow it to become exploited as a symbolic expression of resistance. It does not help when Islamaphobes inflame the moral panic that it is a symbol of puritan Islamic expansionism and bring the debate out of its context. This article clearly demonstrates that extremists know that it works in their favour to have such issues become a symbolic fight as it furthers the argument that Muslims can never fit into secular society.

He further adds that it is irrelevant if the minaret or *niqab* is cultural and not really ‘rooted in Islamic tradition.’ But because it is now a symbol of Islam, it needs to be defended. He also explains how placatory statements that assert that it is only the *niqab* that is opposed, not the veil and not Islam are a ‘*step-by step process that is meant to assimilate the Muslims gradually rather than overwhelm them at risk of alienating them.*’ He then cites the cartoon controversy in Denmark and mentions places in the United States that have taken this issue over the *niqab* further to ask Muslims to not even wear any headscarves. Finally he cautions how this attitude towards Muslim practices will be an eventuality in any non-Muslim country.

The use of religious quotes from the Quran adds a powerful final justification to prove the extremist theme that Muslims can never fit in. In the youtube video lecture *Jihad in Darfur*⁵⁹⁰, Ayman al Zawahiri quotes the Quranic verse citing how Christians

⁵⁹⁰ This video produced by the *as-Sahab* media arm of al-Qaeda, previously accessed from *youtube* on 6th Nov 2010 no longer exists on the internet.

and Jews will never be satisfied with Muslims until they give up Islam.⁵⁹¹ This is a frequently cited Quranic verse used to prove this theme.

In the article, "*All that is happening today is a mirage*" (interview with a Chechen Mujahid)⁵⁹², the following interview appeared to prove the idea that placatory measures to appease Muslims are a ruse and the state will eventually impose measure that restrict and control Muslims,

1. PW: Many of Chechnya's civilians are pleased at what the authorities are doing: the authorities are building homes, they constructed the largest mosque in Europe, they're improving people's lives. Don't you see any changes for the better?

2. A.-M.: Kadyrov brings Tyson to Chechnya, and he'll be bringing Michael Jackson. Then it will be some artistes, some Arabs. Why? He's conducting a policy of the stick and carrot.. Beat the man, beat him and beat him, then throw him a piece of bread. He thinks that's the way to deal

⁵⁹¹ Quran, Verse 2:120

⁵⁹² ""All that is happening today is a mirage" (interview with a Chechen Mujahid) - Kavkazcenter.com", KAVKAZ CENTER, <http://kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2009/04/21/10664.shtml> (accessed October 21, 2011).

with people, but it's all just temporary. I swear, even the Muslim prayers they're allowed to hold today will be banned tomorrow. For no one in Chechnya today can follow the ways of the Prophet. Young people complain to us that they're being told at home not to go to the mosques. They're even being taken out of the mosques. And all the rest is just for show, there's nothing to it... If they were truly supportive of Islam, do you think we'd be against it? No, of course we wouldn't.

3. And all this show is being paid for by our oil. The republic doesn't even get 10 percent of the oil revenues. So why do we take their bait? They're grabbing all the oil and throwing us handouts. Telling us meanwhile that "Russia feeds us". No, it doesn't. Today, if it wasn't for the mujahideen they'd be able to send us into exile as they did in 1944. We have to remember that. They're the people who tormented our fathers, and now they're tormenting us. So everything that Kadyrov does is hypocrisy. It's just that they have control of information, of television. And they can deceive people. And our people are very willing to believe what they're told on TV. There is almost no one left in Chechnya who is able to openly speak the truth. Everything

is under the thumb of the authorities. Even religion is interpreted in the way they want.

4. If we had an independent state, our oil would pay for a fine standard of living. That's why we've taken the path of struggle - so we can have our state, so that the Muslims can live in peace. All that is happening today is a mirage. And it will pass.. Allah is testing the Muslims.”

In this interview, he also alludes that Muslims give an illusion of support to the state as they are dependant on it and fear persecution.

Finally in Awlaki's lecture, *Jihad part 1* that appeared on youtube, a viewer says on the forum below the video,

On one hand we have idiots who are looking for loopholes in Islam to have peace with the kaffir. On the other we have idiots who use Islam to get to their own political objectives. And very few people, who truly fight in the name of Allah to establish shariah and protect their honor in blood and sweat. Maybe this is the group our prophet (saw) who stated that the ummah will be divide into many sects and only one sect will go jannah? ⁵⁹³

⁵⁹³ Discussion forum and youtube video accessed 6 December 2011 no longer exists.

By saying this he entrenches the idea that only those Muslims who go against the grain and stand firm to their beliefs by not capitulating and collaborating with the state or with non-Muslims are in fact the chosen ones. Thus 'not fitting in' can in fact be a sign of belonging to God's chosen.

Identity is another personal narrative that has been the victim of common explanations based on surface observations. This is the idea that being a minority, one would simply gravitate to their ethnic identities under incidents of alienation and marginalisation. But a variation of this that came as a result of my discussions with Muhammad Hee⁵⁹⁴ was the idea of socially imposed identities. In other words Muslims may not choose to see themselves primarily as Muslims, but the hype over the issue keeps forcing them to accept this as their primary identity. Just as the Muslims in Nadia's research were *'tired of being talked about'*⁵⁹⁵, Muslims who see themselves simply as national entities or in terms of other identities⁵⁹⁶, are now told that they are different. This may be done in subtle ways, through sensationalisation in the media about the Islamist threat or from their own communities that shun or criticise them for turning too much towards Western ideals.

⁵⁹⁴ Mr Muhammad Hee is a Danish Muslim convert who was once a leading member of the HUT in Denmark. After getting disillusioned with the movement, he left and later wrote a book about his experiences called "the defector". He has recently completed his Masters Degree. I had an opportunity to speak to him regarding his experiences leading to recruitment in Copenhagen on 4th and 10th March 2009. His poignant and insightful answers shed much light on the entire debate surrounding this issue.

⁵⁹⁵ Nadia Jeld in her research paper on European Muslims who do not belong to any associations. Namely cultural Muslims who took a more pragmatic view on practices such as drinking during social occasions in order not to stand out and not practicing praying 5 times a day) mentioned in her lecture how some of her respondents remarked that they were simply tired of being talked about. (Talk given by her to students in the Copenhagen University Masterclass on 'Islam and Muslims in the Modern World', 1 April 2009.) She elaborated later to me by e-mail to explain how, "*The informants who express this attitude, say it in relation to majority contestation and negative debates about Islam. They express that they want to learn and know more about Islam in order to be able to "defend themselves" and "know for themselves about Islam, and just what others tell them."* See also Nadia Jeldtoft, "Lived Islam – Religious Identity with 'Non-organized'." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 7 (2011): 1134-1151.

⁵⁹⁶ e.g. in terms of their profession or simply a normal citizen like anybody else.

Radicalisation may not always arise from outright cases of racism which one may never have experienced. But one might take an extremist stance gradually with enough accumulation of these exclusionist subtleties that leave a mark on anyone's subconscious. Muhammad cited how identities are ever changing for someone based on what one is experiencing. This is seldom recognised and the overriding identity that may be usually imposed is based on one's ethnicity or religion. This religious identity is now brought to the forefront of one's consciousness due the overwhelming attention it is given and by the level in which he religious label is used to identify the individual.

The factors that contribute to this in Europe were also brought up in our discussions. Muhammed cited how over expounding marginal phenomenon related to any culture or religion serves only to paint the grisly picture that feeds the narratives of extremists from either side of the spectrum.

h. "Do not become defeatist."

Extremist narratives often cite the word '*defeatist.*' By this they are suggesting that pacifist Muslims have a defeatist mindset. Extremist narratives imply that in the minds of such defeatist Muslims, the state or Western capitalist society is all powerful and Muslims see themselves as weaker. Therefore such defeatist Muslims feel that to go against the state or Western capitalist society is idealistic and self-defeating.

Awlaki's article in *Inspire*, "The Tsunami of Change"⁵⁹⁷ is also meant to caution those who feel helpless and powerless from having a defeatist attitude and instead to keep on persevering. Its main argument cites the defeatist attitude in the minds of Muslims after unsuccessful Islamist movements. But the recent Arab uprisings have proven otherwise and are a victory against this defeatist attitude. It proves that an oppressive state even when backed by the West is not invulnerable. Such positive motivations are naturally inspiring to those whose main grievances are a sense of helplessness to oppressive events around them. Religion is brought into this argument to say how Islam helps one awaken from this defeatist attitude.

In the *Inspire* magazine, Shaykh Abu Yahya Al-Libi who wrote about "The Middle Path and the enemy's plot" described how a defeatist mindset is linked to those who have been misled and those for whom Islamic morals are absent to begin with.⁵⁹⁸

Al-Libi also talked about how the West through its rhetoric and propaganda slowly internalizes its ideas in the minds of people. The intention of such propaganda and ideas is to drive Muslims away from Jihad and the Mujahideen. This is because these two terms as a result of such dissemination of ideas, now have a label that instantly associates them with terrorism and extremism. These two concepts are seen as something abhorrent in the West. He goes onto to explain how the West controls labels and definitions. When Muslims use words like moderation it pleases the West as it takes a pacifist meaning and does not propagate resistance to their rule and structure. Therefore he alludes that labels

⁵⁹⁷ *Inspire* issue 5, 50-53

⁵⁹⁸ *Inspire* issue 5, 15

dictated by the West also contribute to defeatist thinking.

Islam on the other hand, he says is not dictated by man, *Ijtihad* (critical reasoning) or by changing times. It is a constant that is divinely ordained and perfect. Anything man-made is prone to fallacies. Thus if it is justice people want, then the true ‘middle way’ is Islam.⁵⁹⁹

We can see how he appropriates away the use of the label ‘the middle path’ used often by ‘moderate’ Muslims to indicate a position of non-extremism. *“Therefore, this is the religion of Islam with its middle way, complete justice and clear call. Not of that propagated by those who have defeated souls, diseased hearts and deceived minds even if millions of people applaud them.”*⁶⁰⁰ The criticism is clearly levelled at counter-radical Muslim ideologues that are seen to ‘moderate’ Islam to suit and please the state or their rulers and therefore receive accolades for it. This to al Libi is a prime example of those with a defeatist mindset which have given up their honour to please their masters:

Among the greatest ways of which they use to conceal their deviation and to propagate their errors is their claim of affiliation to the middle way, moderation and balance. They have coined meanings for these words which they become content with. Their meanings’ source is their thoughts. Their meanings’ structure is fabrication and compromise.

⁵⁹⁹ *Inspire* issue 5, 13-15

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 13

Its essence and pulp is gladdening the West with what pleases it.⁶⁰¹

Looking again at the HUT discussion thread, “*Can There be an Islamic democracy*” and the discussion on Professor Jim Khalili's documentary on the BBC called 'Science and Islam', we see a proposed explanation about the origins of this often cited ‘defeatist’ mindset. Apparently as Islamic civilization fell into decline, they looked to Western systems of governance as they wrongly assumed that the system of their conquerors would be better. This idea has unfortunately been,

...the domain of nearly all 'Muslim' intellectuals for the last 150 years or so especially in all the national liberation movements (except perhaps the central asian republics who fell under the ambit of communism - but are now espousing similar sentiments) that is because they are what ibn Khuldun called the conquered - learning and imitating the way of the people who conquered them. Unfortunately too many people have bought into the idea that defeated Muslims are the same as a defeated Islam.⁶⁰²

⁶⁰¹ *Inspire* issue 5, 14

⁶⁰² "Can There Be an Islamic Democracy? - Post # 5 dated 14-03-2009, 03:19 AM ", *Hizb ut-Tahrir Discussion Forum - Powered by vBulletin*, <http://forum.hizbuttahrir.org/showthread.php?t=1881&highlight=Islamic+Democracy> (accessed October 18, 2011).

This is meant to illustrate what extremists see as constituting defeatism. It is about conformity to those who rule and compromising on Islam's tenets in the process. This is done because the conquerors are seen as being superior in all aspects. As such, Muslims are already mentally defeated, to survive, they not only become subservient but believe progress in life is about pleasing and imitating their masters as Ibn Khuldun had described. The author is alluding to the idea that Muslims are doing exactly this today. But to the author, to do away with this mentality requires first understanding the historical supremacy of Islam in all aspects of social life. His point is that Islam had a better system of governance which Muslims of today because of their inferiority complex in contemporary society have forgotten or have never realised.

Extremist narratives therefore target those who have low self-esteem or feel humiliated and dejected by the state Islam is in. They offer an alternate mental attitude that is meant to reverse this. The word 'defeatist' is mentioned a number of times in their narratives to reverse a mindset of subservience and acceptance of the marginalised situation some Muslims might perceive to find them in. The very promise of an alternate mindset that is positive and empowering can be a great source of appeal in extremist narratives. But more often than not, the label 'defeatist' is used pejoratively to shame readers into adopting an alternate mindset that encompasses the supremacist and confident attitude needed for resistance.

Making reference again to the *Kavkaz* website article “*If Jihad suddenly stopped*”⁶⁰³, we see how defeatism is equated with compromising with non-Muslims and their rulers. It jogs the cultural memory of the people in the region to remember the historical persecution of Muslims whose right to practice Islam was punished. Besides the Sufis, other Muslim groups who might have been labeled as extremist one time or another by the West were equally criticized in this article. For instance, the compromising nature of activist groups such as the Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood) was equated to them being sellouts.

In the website, “*The ignored Puzzle pieces of knowledge,*” written by Samir Khan, the following quote appeared which emphasises the theme that Muslims have a defeatist mentality that looked up to the West. To have any form of awakening required first eliminating this ‘defeatist’ mindset. The ‘noble’ vanguards in this were the classic extremist Muslim ideologues, Syed Qutb and Mawdudi:

The prevailing outlook in the Islāmic countries was the outlook of inferiority compared to the West. Then some of the righteous scholars and writers were deputized with defending the ‘Aqīdah and the Islāmic Shar’īah against the dark orientalist attacks with a heroic defense. And the point of the intellectual shift and what led to a revolution and coup in the Islāmic consciousness were the writings of Abū Al-A’lā Al-Mawdūdī and Sayyid Qutb, may Allāh have Mercy

⁶⁰³ “If Jihad is suddenly stopped - Kavkazcenter.com”, *KAVKAZ CENTER*, <http://www.kavkaz.tv/eng/content/2009/10/26/11113.shtml> (accessed October 15, 2011).

upon them both. And these two men did not settle [just] for defending the Islāmic values; rather, they became hostile to the prevailing conventions, and they began to attack Western civilization and its worth and the prevailing notions in the West with the speech and logic of superiority. And this revolution was similar to a blaze in the awakening of the Arab mentality that had [previously] wallowed in humiliation and defeat, so it was necessary to eliminate both men, and especially Sayyid, may Allāh have Mercy upon him, for his standing at the center of intellectual importance in the Islāmic world. Sayyid was killed at the order of the West, but by Egyptian hands. But his words revived the hearts and moved the emotions. His books spread after his death the way fire spreads in straw, and they became an intellectual methodology that freed the Arabs from polytheistic servitude to the foreign gods so that the hearts would turn freely toward Allāh. This was the intellectual beginning that was followed by many sacrifices by the giants of intellect and foresight from among the scholars and callers.

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⁶⁰⁴ Site <http://inshallahshaheed.muslimpad.com> accessed via the Internet Archives on 6th Sept 2011 no longer store the page.

This quote implies that the ideas that Qutb and Mawdudi started were an impetus for the mental / intellectual revolution to break away from a defeatist mentality. Only after this is achieved can Muslims be confident enough to undertake concrete steps to liberate themselves and regain lost supremacy.

Qutb and Mawdudi were therefore seen as heroes and founders of a mental / intellectual revolution against a defeatist mentality following defeat in wars that internalised a sense of inferiority among Muslims. Quite naturally extremists place great importance on getting rid of this idea of defeatism as they need supporters who feel confident about resisting the militarily and economically more powerful Western world and her allies. The author is suggesting that Qutb was villainised and killed for starting this intellectual revolution against defeatism. The appeal of this concept of resistance against a defeatist mentality can resonate with *anyone* who feels inferior and powerless. We need to understand how at times, it is such themes that create greater resonance with people rather than aspects of extremist ideology such as the caliphate, *Sharia* etc. For they touch on the intrinsic need for people to feel dignified, have a sense of standing as compared to a feeling of being inferior and defeated. This theme of resistance against defeatism thus makes one feel empowered and is very attractive to anyone who feels otherwise.

h. “Al-Ghuraaba: The Stranger.”

When Shaykh Abu Musab Al-Awlaki wrote an article in *Inspire* Issue 5 called “*Why did I choose Al-Qaeda*”, he brought in the theme of “*Al-Ghurraba.*”- *The Stranger*. This is not the first time this revered term was used in extremist narratives. The concept

of the stranger has a special place. He is an anomaly, strange, misunderstood, isolated and vilified for his convictions. His uprightness is a threat to those in power and very few like him are aware about the true nature of things. So he is always targeted by those in power for this. Abu Musab sums this best in his article when he says,

Thereupon, regarding this prophetic description for the people of the truth about their status of estrangement, there is no doubt that the one who lives in a state of fear about his soul being taken for death as a result of his ‘aqidah and jihad is the one who lives in the status of being strange. He lives in state of estrangement because he is accused of having deficiency in his ‘aqidah. This is not the case; rather it is because he is steadfast upon the truth in a time where the supporters have become less in number. Indeed he is a stranger. He lives while fearing that his phone is monitored, he is afraid that his car might be booby-trapped and he can’t move freely throughout the land because the ruler is looking for him. Many people of his tribe are an enemy to him and it is even possible that he finds enmity from his family’s side. He is accused of having a deviant ‘aqidah. Accused that he might disturb the security, and accused that he will be opening a door of harm or otherwise. He will be - without delay – connected with

unjust descriptions. Undoubtedly the attribute of being strange suits that man.⁶⁰⁵

This idea has a natural appeal to any “estranged” individual who can identify with the idea of being called “strange” or a ‘misfit.’ Such individuals might feel alienated and perhaps even vilified for having different ideas. If they resist, they are punished for having different ideas and acting on them. Such an individual might also perceive that the “normal” ones are instead “praised” by those in power for their conformity to state sanctioned values. More importantly, those who wish to have the label “*Gurraba*” see themselves part of a special in group who feel they alone are privy to the truth and are thus oppressed for it.

In the clearguidance forums, there was a discussion thread regarding an American Muslim girl who wore a headscarf and wooed the audience in a football field when she sang the American national anthem with passion. A comment appeared,

I wonder when she last time she read the quraan with such passion? if she keeps doing what she is doing, when she will be singing her way into hell!!! flipping munafiqs!!! and they look down at us, and pray we change our ways so that we could attain that which they have, who are they???...Such modern so called moderate muslims are the real ones who are hurting the image of Islam. May God

⁶⁰⁵ Inspire Issue 5, 63

protect us and make us from the Ghuraaba.⁶⁰⁶

Quite simply, the reader here is implying that it is better to be a *stranger* than associate with moderate Muslims who are accepted by the state but are apologetic lackeys who look down on others who do not conform like they do.

In the *Cageprisoners* interview with Awlaki, in *Ummah.com*, this comment appeared in the discussion thread,

we need to be more aware of all of the trials and tribulations that Muslims are enduring maybe it will wipe that stupid, ISLAM MEANS PEACE grin from our faces maybe we will stop getting so giddy because IKEA has blue khimars for the sisters maybe we will realize that our only solution comes from being the STRANGERS that our Prophet foretold.⁶⁰⁷

In a very raw manner, the reader is saying how the rhetoric about peace and Islam is apologetic, defeatist and distancing Muslims from realizing the oppression that is

⁶⁰⁶ "post dated 10-04-2002 03:48 PM & 10-04-2002 07:38 PM ," *clear guidance forum archives*, http://clearguidance.blogspot.com/2002_09_29_archive.html (accessed October 21, 2011).

⁶⁰⁷ " Cageprisoners interview with Awlaki! post # 12 dated 01-01-08 02:44 PM ", *Ummah.com | Islamic and Muslim Discussion Forum*, <http://www.ummah.com/forum/showthread.php?153971-Cageprisoners-interview-with-Awlaki!> (accessed October 21, 2011).

happening around them. If achieving this realization and being able to do something about it requires becoming the concept of the ‘stranger’ in Islam and thereby distancing oneself from the mainstream, then it is a fate far better.

We must not directly equate the concept of the ‘stranger’ with a simple reference to an alienated or marginalized individual. Its meaning is deeper than that. The ‘stranger’ is a position that is only for a chosen few who are willing to make the sacrifice. This sacrifice would entail purposefully distancing oneself from the mainstream and friends and family if needs be. Status does not come with it, only hardship. But ultimate victory belongs to the ‘stranger’ as he is favored by God to do his will. In many ways it is a positive take that reverses one’s status of being estranged into something noble and privileged.

i. “The Chosen.”

In most of the themes mentioned there is an inevitable allusion to the idea of the ‘Chosen’. But this theme works bidirectionally. One is that the individual is chosen by God for this role and he or she should accept all the hardship it entails as final victory belongs to this privileged few. The other idea of the chosen is that the individual deliberately chooses this path as a means of salvation and for the betterment of the Muslim community. This will result in certain qualities being ascribed onto him or her and developed in the course of one’s journey. This choice is therefore as a result of a ‘calling’ to serve Islam’s oppressed and to redeem its honour. For instance, take a look at the following post which appear on the *Ansar al Jihad* website which illustrates this

point,

You are the only ones in the peninsula of Islam who possess the weapons. Support the oppressed, and assist the distressed. Your brothers in Gaza wait impatiently for you. Rescue them; prevent their killing, and lift their siege. Your ancestors were the ones who conquered Palestine, the Levant, and Iraq; whose armies reached the gates of France and the border of China. Your sons depicted the greatest images of heroism in Baghdad, Kabul, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and elsewhere.⁶⁰⁸

In *Defence of the Muslim Lands*⁶⁰⁹ Abdullah Azzam mentioned how the holy prophet had predicted that there will come a time when Muslims would hate to fight for Islam. There would be "*Hatred of fighting*" as well as those who will discourage those who want to. But only a chosen few will remain true and fight for Islam. Extremists live out this self-fulfilling prophecy⁶¹⁰ which they can relate to as they see themselves in the same situation. For instance, there might be objections from their family and friends. A

⁶⁰⁸ Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula : "*and They Devised Plans and Allah too had Arranged a Plan*" - Msg to people in Yemen. (Al-Malahim Media): Seventh Issue of the Magazine Jihad Publications 301-22-2009 10:03 PM. Can also be viewed in: "audio message by Al-Qa`ida Organization in Arabian Peninsula leader, Abu-Basir Nasir al-Wuhayshi, entitled "They Plot and Plan, and God Plans Too - Ku soo Dhawoow Golaha Islaamiga ah ee Alqimmah", *Ku soo Dhawoow Golaha Islaamiga ah ee Alqimmah - Powered by vBulletin*, <http://www.alqimmah.net/showthread.php?t=3507> (accessed October 21, 2011).

⁶⁰⁹ Abdullah Azzam, "Defence of the Muslim Lands, "The First Obligation After Iman", Part 1", *salafiyyah-jadeedah: Fake Salafi Refutations*, http://.tripod.com/Qital/Part_1.htm (accessed October 21, 2011).

⁶¹⁰ This work by Azzam also deals with the theme of prophecy explained in p264.

lot of counter radical ideology and mainstream Muslim scholars will not only discourage but vilify such a move. Thus much of such narratives encourage the reader to mentally prepare for the hardships, objections and vilification that will follow if one chooses such a path. But it will be a path that will be ultimately rewarding for the individual on the basis of their perseverance and faith.

In a Youtube lecture by Muhammad Sheikh entitled “*What Hassan Al-Banna said about Jihad,*” a quote by Al-Banna was mentioned in the forum, “*Allah has specifically honoured the Mujahideen with certain exceptional qualities, both spiritual and practical, to benefit them in this world and the next.*”⁶¹¹ This quote reveals that the ideal of the ‘chosen’ which classical extremist Muslim ideologues such as Al-Banna envisioned has not lost its resonance and is in fact being propogated. By being part of the chosen *Mujahideen*, you are part of an elite group that is chosen to be ascribed with great qualities, leading to great results in this world and next.

Being chosen or choosing the path of Jihad is something that has to be demonstrated. It all boils down to deeds and not mere words. It was mentioned earlier in this study that Syed Qutb likewise refers to the concept of ‘*Haraka*’ (referring to activism)⁶¹² in his writings. Qutb had stressed how “*there is no faith without action...*”

⁶¹¹ Post no longer exists, quote can also be viewed in "JIHAD - Hasan al-Banna: All Muslims Must Make Jihad." Young Muslims - In Pursuit of Allah's Pleasure. http://web.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/jihad/ (accessed October 21, 2011).

⁶¹² See Chapter 3, pg 72, Larsen 2006, 89 John Møller’s analysis of Qutub’s work, “*In the Shade of the Quran.*”, in which he cites Carré to explain how *Haraka (Movement)* is referring to activism.

which accentuates the primacy of activism.⁶¹³ In the *Ummah.com* forum, during a discussion on Alwaki's lectures, Qutb's was quoted as having said, "*Indeed our words will remain lifeless, until we die in pursuit of those words, then those same words will be brought to life and live amongst the people, inspiring them and bringing their hearts to life.*"⁶¹⁴

In on-line forums such as the *clearguidance* forum, this idea of those who choose the path of Jihad needing to demonstrate their faith by action is clearly expressed:

I advise all those who exert their time in matters like this without going to the lands of the muslims to remove the oppression to repent. NO matter how much you scream gihad and remove the tawagheet from the muslims lands your word mean nothing. Where is the action? where is the loss of limbs?May guide those internet mugahideen or humiliate those internet mugahideen. They are cowards real cowards.

This narrative clearly communicates the idea that it is shameful for those who choose such a path to resist only in words. Very much in line with what Qutb was

⁶¹³ Qutb,"*In the Shade of the Quran.*"4, 2215, *sūra 17* in Ibid, 92

⁶¹⁴ " Anwar Al-Awlaki Lectures," *Ummah.com | Islamic and Muslim Discussion Forum*, <http://www.ummah.com/forum/showthread.php?119630-Anwar-Al-Awlaki-Lectures> (accessed October 21, 2011).

expressing when he talked about “*Haraka*”. This central message that commitment to Jihad should be expressed in action and not words has never changed from the time of Qutb and it is has been only reintroduced and reemphasized in on-line forums. In the Jihadist forums, members laud Jihadists who carry out actual attacks and provoke each other to not just talk about Jihad but actually do it. Some have actually succumbed to this on-line spurring.⁶¹⁵

The ‘chosen’ in the world of Muslim extremism are required to travel a difficult path with equally difficult choices to make. As expressed in earlier themes, this might require seeking out the truth even if it means going against mainstream ideas and conventions, being vigilant against state sanctioned rhetoric and learning to be conscious of any ruses and conspiracies and guarding oneself against a defeatist mentality. But most of all choosing the path of the ‘*Ghuraba*’ (Stranger) and turning one’s back on all that represented their earlier life. Extremist Muslims exhort the idea that apparently only a ‘chosen few’ can do this or would choose to do this.

⁶¹⁵ David Stringer, "Newsvine - Brash and violent: al-Qaida's new mouthpieces", *Newsvine - Get Smarter Here*, http://www.newsvine.com/_news/2011/06/01/6763959-brash-and-violent-al-qaidas-new-mouthpieces (accessed August 28, 2011).

CHAPTER 8

STUDY FINDINGS

PART 3

THE ARGUMENTATION CLUSTER.

The argumentation cluster embodies themes that illustrate the persuasive techniques that rely on purely rational arguments or sophist and dialectical arguments that have rational components imbedded in them. This is placed as a distinct cluster as it relates to themes that become appealing mainly due to the method of argumentation used. These themes move away from poetic arguments that rely purely on emotive resonance and instead revolve around the argumentation techniques mentioned below. They are as follows:

- a) “Clarity of purpose.” (Rational Argument)

- b) “Linking verifiable ‘truths’ to form an *ignoratio elenchi* argument. (Sophist / Rational argument)

- c) “Reductionism.” (Rational argument)

- d) “We know what you are saying about us and this is what we say to that.” (Dialectical / Rational Argument)

e) “Corroborative and empirical analysis.” (Rational argument)

a. “Clarity of Purpose”

There is little or no ambiguity with extremists in their interpretation of issues, events, how religion is interpreted and in their proposed guidance and solutions. Even in highly debatable issues and complex arguments with many variables. This makes their arguments and proposed solutions very coherent and persuasive.

For example, in the discussion thread following Awlaki’s *youtube* lecture entitled, “*Allah is Preparing us for Victory*” & “*True Warrior*”, one of the readers wrote. “*Always his lectures are simple and have a deep meanings.*”⁶¹⁶ This demonstrates how simplicity in the narrative helps create coherent and unambiguous arguments that are more convincing. The reader feels that the author does not fudge or hide in the complexity of dialogue.

The coherent and straightforward arguments also create the impression that the author has a clear and uncompromising stand. These popular lectures portray Awlaki as unwavering in his beliefs and that endears him to his readers and gives them confidence. One reader actually says in the discussion thread, “*...because he doesn’t compromise the*

⁶¹⁶ Original Youtube post no longer exists, post can also be viewed at: "Allah is preparing us for VICTORY! Imam Anwar Al-Awlaki | Post dated June 13th, 2010 11:43 pm", Coate Media Web Site Design, <http://coatemediamedia.com/allah-is-preparing-us-for-victory-imam-anwar-al-awlaki/> (accessed October 22, 2011).

Quran and sunnah for any man made law and as we can see he is being chased by America and its puppet nations because he speaks the truth..”⁶¹⁷ This also suggests that if readers feel that particular authors are persecuted for their sayings and beliefs, then what the authors say must be true, as the assumption is that only those who have the courage to tell the raw truth and who are uncompromising in their beliefs are persecuted.

Likewise the religious stance in extremist narratives is also very explicit and there is little room for any ambiguity in interpretation. When counter- extremist ideology religious scholars portray an alternative interpretation and cite the need to apply the meaning according to context, they come across as being ambiguous in contrast to the extremists who carry an impression of being are very direct and clear in their messages.

AQAP’s Inspire magazine also features a quote by Phil Rees⁶¹⁸ which says,

I think Bin Ladin is constructing a coherent philosophy.

Again the West doesn’t want to hear this. They want to think that he’s a kind of mindless bomber. But basically he does offer an alternative to what he considers the growth of market capitalism, neo-liberalism if you will, that developed in the West after 1979-1980 with Reagan, with Thatcher. And he believes now that Islam offers challenge to that. Hence the importance of climate change. He

⁶¹⁷ Forum quotes dated 1 Sept 2011 captured from Youtube, no longer exist on the internet.

⁶¹⁸ Author and Islamic movements expert.

believes that Western Industry is responsible for that. Western industrial growth which is going to destroy our planet. So I think he is tapping into something more fundamental and that the only challenge to global market capitalism now, he would argue comes from Islamism and come from the possibility of a caliphate.

Citing such comments also demonstrate how extremists themselves want to promote the impression that their ideas are clear and coherent. It is a theme they want to espouse.

Ed Husain's experiential account also demonstrates how the theme of 'clarity of purpose' appeals to the private ambitions of members in the closed world of extremist movements like HUT. He explained how this was not an explicit feature but one that was subtly encouraged. There was competition and praise to be earned in the religious study circles of these groups to the point that success in life meant advancement and success in the organization.⁶¹⁹ This was taken to the point that the activism became the religion in some sense. *"My God, however, was no longer at home, he had to be sought out in activism, drive, energy, mobilizing and expanding the Islamic movement."*⁶²⁰ This underscores the power of activism over the religious doctrine as the real mover behind the force of numbers and collective behaviour. To many of them they felt as they were *"pioneers at the cutting edge of this new global development of confronting the West in*

⁶¹⁹ Husain, 38

⁶²⁰ Ibid., 39

its own backyard.”⁶²¹ The end effect of all this was a clear vision and purpose socially internalised in extremist Muslims belonging to such groups.

Another source of appeal of HUT to Husain was that he noticed that members were of a higher intellectual calibre. To him they always had answers to hard questions that others would give only political or dodgy answers to. One of his main reasons to move to the HUT was that he felt they had concrete ideas as opposed to vague ideas (he considered Mawdudi’s ideas as vague) of how to create an Islamic state.⁶²²

When HUT activists spoke in Universities it was on topics that were considered taboo by traditional Mosque authorities and which were swept under the carpet by their families. Which was ideal for recruitment as the *“First generation of British Born Muslims were now in university in large numbers and suffered from common problems that the Hizb tapped into.”*⁶²³ These issues included marriage, discrimination, the social party culture and the place of Muslims in it.

This experiential account by Husain demonstrates the clarity of purpose that is created in the minds of an extremist’s audience. In extremist narratives, issues cited directly resonate with the audience and on matters they can again directly identify with. These issues are presented clearly in manner that makes the audience feel that placatory rhetoric is filtered out to present the issue in the ‘raw’ – thus making it clear and coherent. Solutions proposed are also equally direct. There is no portfolio of choices to

⁶²¹ Ibid., 73-74

⁶²² Ibid., 90

⁶²³ Ibid., 106

create uncertainty or doubt but only one – Jihad in all its manifestations.

Another interesting point that came as a result of my discussions with Muhammad Hee was on the importance of valid issues and grievances. He agreed that issues that are affecting Muslims can be a prime factor for making an extremist narrative persuasive. The role played by valid issues contributing to extremism can be above social, individual or structural conditions. The issues many a times have clear and valid grounds that need resolution. Be it cases of discrimination or atrocities done against Muslims elsewhere in the world. Simply telling Muslims not to be overly affected by them to the point of joining radical groups is not enough. The issues need voice and concrete actions towards real solutions, which extremists will exploit and claim to provide. Without which the impetus for radicalisation will always remain. Muhammad also cited how education and the experiences of meeting many people in the academic world helped open his mind to other coherent discourses and ideas. This helped to explain to him the state of things and his own experiences which previously was only addressed by the repertoire offered by HUT.

b. “Linking verifiable ‘truths’ to form an *ignoratio elenchi* argument. (Rational/Sophist argument)

An, “*ignoratio elenchi* occurs when an argument purporting to establish a specific conclusion is directed, instead, to proving a different conclusion. This version is often termed the red herring fallacy—an irrelevant subject is interjected into the

conversation to divert attention away from the main issue.”⁶²⁴

But is this happening in the al-Qaeda magazine *Inspire*? Everything *Inspire* builds up in its articles is meant to point to end states they advocate such as resistance to tyrannical rulers and their supporters, Sharia as the ideal solution for governance, militancy as the only viable resort etc. They do not divert attention per se but give different conclusions (e.g. from the West) to arguments, incidents and issues. For instance in the *Inspire* article, “*Al – Saud: Lodging a Criminal*” by Shaykh Ibrahim al-Rubaish, when the Saudi monarchy gave asylum to deposed Tunisian ruler, Ben Ali, the author said “*So the criminal does not become a criminal unless if he is wanted by the dogs of al-Saud?*” The crux of the argument about this action is that since Saudis support such ‘apostate’ rulers, they are as ‘criminal’ as Ben Ali. But they get away with it as they have the power to label who is ‘criminal.’ This of course will incite readers. The argument now diverts the attention from Ben Ali to other ‘rulers’ (e.g. Saudi Royalty). That is the conclusion AQ wants to get at which is in line with their objectives. Thus what AQ is doing is taking one “incident” or phenomenon and building an argument to a conclusion that validates their objectives. It is not an *ignoratio elenchi* argument in the true sense as the argument is merely bringing up a variable that can lead to other plausible conclusions. It has a logical premise in that Ben Ali is a criminal in the eyes of Tunisian people but the fact that the Saudi Monarchy granted him asylum leads to a plausible conclusion that the Saudis do not see it this way. This is irrespective of whether the Saudi’s might have had other strategic reasons for doing this. It was cited in al-Jazeera,

⁶²⁴ Ignoratio Elenchi, "Philosophy Home Page", <http://philosophy.lander.edu/logic/ignoratio.html> (accessed August 28, 2011).

By taking him in, the Saudis wanted to "defuse" the tensions on the streets of Tunisia. It was certainly "not out of sympathy" for Ben Ali, Mustafa Alani, research director at Dubai's Gulf Research Centre, said. The Saudis had two options -- either they "contribute to solving the problem by giving him refuge" or "let him stay in the country ... (where) things would go from bad to worse," he said.⁶²⁵

But what all this shows is that their argumentation logic employs a lot of *argumentum ad hominem*. In that it employs a circumstantial *ad hominem* argument to create the necessary pejorative effect by linking the issue of Saudis being 'criminal rulers' to their action of supporting someone the Tunisians hate. There is also an element of *argumentum ad populum*. For example, since many of the readers regard Ben Ali as a criminal and hate him, therefore he is 'criminal'; and stemming from that anyone who supports him is as well, i.e. the Saudis. This is how AQ leverages on populist sentiments of those in the Middle East as well as those critical of the West to build up their arguments. These populist sentiments are not invalid by virtue of being sentiments of the masses per se but they do provide another angle by which the conclusion to an argument is made persuasive.

In summary, what al-Qaeda does is that it rationalizes and builds an argument

⁶²⁵ AJE - Al Jazeera English, "Ben Ali gets refuge in Saudi Arabia - Middle East - Al Jazeera English", *AJE - Al Jazeera English*, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/01/201111652129710582.html> (accessed August 28, 2011).

based on facts that can be verified. But the conclusion they advocate is directed towards validating their goals and not necessarily what such arguments would alternatively point to. Coupled with populist and emotive sentiments, the final conclusion they propose then becomes very persuasive. If we were to look at this same example in more simple terms it would go something like this. Ben Ali is not liked by the masses. This is verifiable and true. The Saudi government supports him and the evidence is in the fact that they grant him asylum. The granting of asylum is verifiable and true. The Saudis' have the power to label whomever they feel has violated their rules as criminal. So does any government for that matter. So it is verifiable and true. The conclusion by the extremists - the Saudis who dictate who is a criminal are hypocrites as they are strong supporters of such dictators who are in the same league as them so they deserve to be deposed of someday soon. Whether this conclusion is correct or not is another matter. But when they invoke the sentiments of the people who hate Ben Ali (*argumentum ad populum*) and use inciteful circumstances and language, (*argumentum ad hominem*), the end effect of the conclusion they propose becomes highly persuasive.

Muhammad Hee in our discussions also cited how right wing associations and state apparatuses that operate from a culture of fear of the other and extremist radical groups that go the other extreme to demonise mainstream society actually empower each other. Meaning to the extremist, life makes sense once you find the demon in mainstream society to blame for their grievances in all spheres of their life. Every time, a right wing politician paints a picture of the Islamist threat and alluding to the incompatibility or revulsion of incidents of feudal, violent and intolerant actions by some

Muslims, they give extremists the fodder to say how Islam is under attack.⁶²⁶ Extremist Muslims on the other hand compound the situation by giving xenophobes exactly the nightmare they fear. The victims of this mutually reinforcing attrition are everyone in the middle. Muslims and non-Muslims alike who find it very hard to take walk the middle ground without giving into perceptions, stereotypes and most importantly fears.

The dynamics of how this happens is also interesting. Muhammad cited reinforcement by similar personal narratives. He then gave the example of someone from a minority group who lost a job application to someone less qualified but belonging to a majority group. Now imagine if that same person met another person who went through a similar experience. Then these personal narratives reinforce each other to the point that the individual might say ‘yes! It is true then! We are being victimised by who we are!’ The power of these personal narratives should not be underestimated. For they more than anything else can provide the conduits to entrench and internalise grand ideologies that connect personal accounts (which can be verifiable truths) to concluding explanations based on ideas of oppression, resistance, justice and identity.

c) “Reductionism.” (Rational / Rhetorical argument)

Aragones_et. al explain how ,

⁶²⁶ Take for example the movie entitled ‘*fitna*’ by Geert Wilders. The issue being discussed here is not about the content of the movie or the idea of free speech or the validity of the criticisms but rather its effects.

The art of rhetoric may be defined as changing other people's minds (opinions, beliefs) without providing them new information. One technique heavily used by rhetoric employs analogies. Using analogies, one may draw the listener's attention to similarities between cases and to re-organize existing information in a way that highlights certain regularities.⁶²⁷

The use of analogies is a trademark of many an extremist narrative. This also extends to reducing the variables of a complex issue to simple equivalents that anyone from any intellectual background can relate to. This might seem as if the narratives are taking a simplistic view and not taking into account the myriad number of unmentioned factors that exist in a complex issue. But on the other hand, such reductionist arguments find appeal in people who are so inundated with arguments that never get to the root of the issue and seem to be covering the 'truth' in layers of complexity. The attitude of 'truth is simple' might resonate very well with readers in internet forums who have to make a quick and strong point using minimal words. Take for example the following.

⁶²⁷ Aragonés, Enriqueta, Itzhak Gilboa, Andrew Postlewaite, and David Schmeidler, "Rhetoric and Analogies", Tel Aviv University, www.tau.ac.il/~schmeid/PDF/AGPS_Rhetoric_and_Analogies.pdf (accessed August 26, 2011).

Awlaki in his lecture, "*The dust will never settle*,"⁶²⁸ was debating the issue of whether permission from the ruler of a nation is needed before one can undertake jihad. In fact, this is precisely the stand that appears in literature from counter radical ideology scholars,

Under the leadership of an appropriate authority
Scholars are in agreement that the issue of armed jihad
should be decided by the leaders of a country. Individuals
and organizations do not have the authority to launch
armed jihad in the name of Islam or on behalf of the
Muslim community. This is because the issue of armed
jihad has huge repercussions on the general public. Hence,
only those in power and have received the mandate of the
people are in a position to decide.⁶²⁹

While this is indeed the correct reasoning on Jihad in mainstream Islam, extremists through the use of reductionist analogies put a bare bones argument that is hard to refute at the surface. In this case Awlaki uses the simple analogy of someone who wants to attack your house, so you fight to defend it. In this dire situation, an individual certainly does not need the permission of a ruler to defend oneself or his property.

⁶²⁸ Anwar al-Awlaki, "Imaam Anwar al-Awlaki - The Dust Will Never Settle Down [Part 1/10] - YouTube", *YouTube - Broadcast Yourself*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ao5PUvxUF14> (accessed October 22, 2011).

⁶²⁹ Q & A on Jihad, 2007, Muhammad Haniff Hassan and Mohamed Bin Ali, <http://www.pvtr.org/pdf/Ideology%20Response/booklet%20jihad-english.pdf>

While the logic of this reductionist argument can be defeated by bringing in more variables to the issue, such a statement has already created a powerful effect on the online reader, who will not be privy to a counter argument. The extremist argument naturally gains credence by virtue of having no credible rejoining answer or new information to the claim based on the reductionist argument.

In the *Clearguidance* forums, the following posts appeared.⁶³⁰ This is with regards to the issue of US troops being allowed to stay in Saudi Arabia. The question being debated is; if the Saudi monarch has agreed for US troops to stay in Muslim lands as guests, is it permissible to fight them? :

Is killing such 'guests' in the country with or without the permission of the government according to the sharriah of Allah? WELL ITS LIKE ASKING IF ITS PROPER TO KILL THE KILLER WHOM MY BROTHER HIRED TO KILL ME, BECAUSE HE IS THE GUEST OF MY BROTHER WHO LIVES WITH ME

Yes We are Sorry about that children but We have to look thousands of other Muslim children who r under attack of

⁶³⁰ "Posts Dated, 05-13-2003 09:19 PM , 05-13-2003 08:52 PM & 05-14-2003 05:59 AM ", *clear guidance discussion forum archives*, http://clearguidance.blogspot.com/2003_05_11_archive.html (accessed October 22, 2011).

Crusaders....

just an example, a looter entered yur home and threat you to give money otherwise they will kill ur child. If u accept their demand to save yur child it means u r allowing that looter to do same wid other ppl.

so in my personal thinking, attack that looter and dont care yur child. If u succeed to arrest that looter and yur child martyred by him then it will be better to save other children and familes.

We see in this narrative, anological logic being used to answer a complex question. This is combined with a cold and deadly logic that gets morally justified by attributing it to altruism. In short, having collateral victims is acceptable if it serves a greater need. The cold utilitarian logic of the needs of the many is the emphasis here.

The narrative goes onto say the following,

...whats the difference between the Crusaders who were there in Muslim lands with the permission and support of the Fatimids, and the Americans who are there now also with the permission and support of Saudi Arabia and other

governments?

Whats the difference between the Mongols who were there with the permission and support of the Alawites, and the Americans who are currently in the same place with the support of various Muslim governments?

What is the difference between the mujahideen of back then like Salahudden who fought against the Crusaders and opposed the established governments like the Fatimids?

Or what about the mujahid Sayfud-Deen who fought against the Mongols?

What is the difference between them, and these "terrorists" of today? I mean, really...

This narrative uses a reductionist argument based on historical precedence that equates the Saudi government allowing the US to be on their soil with events from Islam's past. Multiple analogies are used in the absence of further variables. The strength of this argument lies in the historical corroboration behind the analogies employed and the logical similarities between the episodes described. The conclusion to this narrative is that in the past enemies of Islam were attacked irrespective of whether they had the

support of reigning Muslim rulers. When not countered back directly with new information, such statements fester in cyberspace and any delayed retort by moderate Muslims would have lost its impetus by then.

Such reductionist argumentations can have a rational basis. In *Inspire* issue 1, under the title, “*Questions we should all be asking,*” the following narrative appeared, “*Why does the vast majority of Western media outlets refer to Jihadi media as ‘propaganda’ when every media outlet in the world has an agenda to propagate for the purpose of altering mindsets in one way or another?*”⁶³¹

This is a rational argument that uses comparatives based on similar models. Extremists in *Inspire* are highly aware of the labels ascribed onto them and their implications. ‘Propaganda’ for instance has a pejorative connotation which implies that the narrative is meant to emotively sway and has no rational basis. The *Inspire* magazine editors know this and want to prove otherwise. Their starting premise is that “*every media outlet in the world has an agenda to propagate for the purpose of altering mindsets in one way or another.*” The narrative then puts forth the idea that because of this similar model, their media narratives are no different from the ones in the West. Therefore, if the latter is taken credibly, so should theirs. By reducing the argument to simple comparatives that are easily accepted, the argument gains credibility. In this case, why should their narratives be called propaganda, when similar Western narratives do the same and escape this label?

⁶³¹ *Inspire* issue 1, p7

Such sort and sharp quotes which use analogies and other reductionist arguments create the necessary impact at strategic points in a narrative to make the reader ponder on alternate perspectives they would seldom think off. This section in *Inspire* labelled '*Questions we should be asking*' is meant to serve as this very instigator. Thus an open ended question with reductionist comparatives leaves the avenue open for readers to be easily led to extremist worldviews.

d) “We know what you are saying about us and this is what we say to that.” (Rational / Dialectical Argument)

Husain in his experiential account described members in groups such as HUT to be very secretive and they worked in small cell groups known as the “*halaqah*” which became akin to an alternative family.⁶³² The dynamics of the halaqah involved asking serious questions, no frivolity, secrecy and discipline which cemented the group. Jihad was on anyone who opposed the Islamist cell. There was “*an inbuilt culture of aggressive argumentation, dogged debate and an inherent ability to cause offence.*” In fact they were taught to “*Never defend, always offend!*”⁶³³ Their aggression actually bolstered their image and their sensational views were good for the news.⁶³⁴ This helped create the image that they had the loudest and clearest voice.⁶³⁵ This account by Husain can be indicative of the sense of power that such confrontational group actions instil in members

“*Never defend, always offend...*” is one of the predominant argumentation techniques in extremist narratives which take the criticism over to the ones accusing.

⁶³² Ibid., 94

⁶³³ Ibid., 100

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 102

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 105

This can also involve showing how the opponent is guilty of the same act they are being accused of. Bali Bomber, Imam Samudra's quote in "*Aku Melawan Terroris*," (I fight terrorists) is a classic example. The terrorists he is referring to is of course, the United States and her allies. While this might sound like simplistic almost childish mudslinging, extremists have many examples of sophisticated narratives that combine a rational construct to this approach. Put simply, it is dialectical argument with rational corroboration, which naturally enhances its credibility with critical readers. Anwar Awlaki is one extremist ideologue who specialises in this form of argumentative style.

Awlaki in this article in his article, "*The Tsunami of Change*"⁶³⁶ about the Arab uprisings mentions how the West is, "*unhappy for the departure of some of its closest and most reliable friends, but yet willing to betray them and ride on the wave of change that is sweeping the area.*" This is of course in reference to the Arab leaders deemed to be lackeys of the US and the West who have been overthrown by their people.

This is an example of a dialectical argument that throws back the same accusation that the West is accusing al-Qaeda of. Academic and journalistic analysis from the West have suggested that al-Qaeda is riding on the change in the region and hoping to benefit from it and claim it as their victory as well.⁶³⁷ Al-Qaeda here is saying that it is actually the West that is instead trying to ride on this sweeping change, support the new people in

⁶³⁶ *Inspire* issue 5, 50-53.

⁶³⁷ ABCNews.com, "Page 2: Al Qaeda Tries To Grab A Piece of Arab Revolutions - ABC News." *ABCNews.com: Daily News, Breaking News and Video Broadcasts - ABC News*, <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/al-qaeda-grab-piece-arab-revolutions/story?id=13257087&page=2> (accessed August 28, 2011).

power who are on their side and claim it is a victory for democracy instead. It is also meant to show that the West is opportunistic and hypocritical in its support of the regimes in the Middle East and does not have the welfare of the Muslim people at heart.

“The Western leaders realize that it would be unwise to reveal their true feelings of what is happening. The West knows that it would be unwise to stand by their friends when the masses have spoken out and asked for freedom, a principle the West claims that it stands for.” In other words the West needs to hide its hypocrisy. The dialectical argument here is meant to expose this hypocrisy.

He then directly quotes the criticism against Al-Qaeda used by Western leaders and journalists. In particular, he cites the following quote by Hillary Clinton, who said,

The success of peaceful protests discredited the extremists and exposed their bankrupt arguments.” Robert Gates thinks that the Arab protests represent a major setback to al Qaeda. Fareed Zakaria asserts: “there is an interesting debate on whether the events in the Middle East are good for the United States, the West, good for peace and stability, but I think there can be little dispute about whom they are bad for: al Qaeda. In fact the Arab revolts of 2011 represent a total repudiation of al Qaeda's founding ideology.

Awlaki then tactically counters these accusations by categorically stating that that it is still a victory for Muslim people as it is ultimately indicative of the fact that the West is losing its hold on power in the Middle East. As this is also what al-Qaeda wanted all along, it is a victory for all Muslims including al-Qaeda.

The outcome doesn't have to be an Islamic government for us to consider what is occurring to be a step in the right direction...Even if the upcoming governments wanted to continue with a policy of appeasing the West and Israel, they would not have the strength and depth of power that the previous governments had developed over the past three decades. In addition to that, it would be difficult for a government that came into power, in order to fulfill the aspirations of the people for freedom, to restrict their freedoms even if it wanted to and was pushed by the West to do so. If the West is counting on an Animal Farm scenario to follow the revolution, they are definitely mistaken.

So in this case, when the West accuses al-Qaeda of becoming irrelevant and losing control of the Middle East, the same accusation is thrown back at the West. I.e. That it is in fact the West instead that it is losing its hold on the Middle East as a result of the recent Arab revolutions. Corroborations come in the form of simple but logical end states.

Very simply as the end state of removing an authoritarian, corrupt lackey leader of the West is the same as what al-Qaeda wants, how can this be a bad thing for them? Is it not a victory for them as well? Thus this represents an example of dialectical argument that has epistemic rationality.

He then adds, *“Yemen would also represent another great opportunity for the West to show their hypocrisy of calling for freedoms while supporting a dictator just because they do not want Muslims to be ruled by Islam.”*

Another form of dialectical argumentation style is seen here. *“Calling for freedom while supporting a dictator”* is a dialectical argument that throws back the accusation commonly cited in US political rhetoric against extremists.⁶³⁸ There is mainstream critique to back this allegation⁶³⁹ and events that can be made to seem corroborative. But the phrase ends with a statement that will cause an emotive reaction - *“Because they do not want Muslims to be ruled by Islam.”* This is what the author (Awlaki) hopes to achieve in this paragraph. Those who might be inclined to believe the statement that alleges the hypocrisy of the West might also be inclined to believe the next sentence which presupposes why they do this. Thus we can see in extremist Muslim narratives, arguments which leverage on earlier ‘rational’ arguments to make the subsequent claims

⁶³⁸ Quotes by US Politicians that terrorists are waging a war on ‘Freedom’, see War on freedom - Source-Watch." SourceWatch. http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=War_on_freedom (accessed August 28, 2011)

⁶³⁹ See Post entitled, “A divided people; The West's support for dictators and monarchies over democracies”, in Anup Shah, "Control of Resources; Supporting Dictators, Rise of Terrorism", *Global Issues: social, political, economic and environmental issues that affect us all*, [http://www.globalissues.org/article/260/control-of-resources-supporting-dictators-rise-of-errorism#AdividedpeopleTheWestssupportfordictatorsandmonarchiesoverdemocracies](http://www.globalissues.org/article/260/control-of-resources-supporting-dictators-rise-of-terrorism#AdividedpeopleTheWestssupportfordictatorsandmonarchiesoverdemocracies) (accessed August 28, 2011).

persuasive.

Awlaki then says, “*Doesn't the West realize how the jihadi work would just take off as soon as the regimes of the Gulf start crumbling?*” By citing the exact fear of the West (A regime sympathetic to Islamists making them stronger) as a possible outcome, the argument becomes believable. He corroborates it by citing increased Jihadi activity in the region. “Increase” while not empirically verifiable, is taken as a given:

“Even without this wave of change in the Muslim world, the jihad movement was on the rise. With the new developments in the area, one can only expect that the great doors of opportunity would open up for the mujahidin all over the world.”

Here he is directly taking the earlier dialectical/ rational argument about the Arab revolution being bad for the West further by extrapolating it to mean that it would therefore conversely be indicative of even better times for the Jihadists. This is a counterargument to the accusation that the Arab revolution is bad for al-Qaeda’s *Raison d'être*. The argument becomes even more persuasive not by the former statement but by the latter statement because it extrapolates what is rationally possible. I.e. the removal of authoritarian Muslim leaders who used to crack down on them can only be a sign of better times, “*the great doors of opportunity would open up for the mujahidin all over the world.*” Again showing in their narratives how as long as one part of their argument has a rational basis it has the capacity to make the entire narrative sound convincing.

e) **“Corroborative and empirical analysis.” (Rational argument)**

The research reveals that many of the themes that have been presented thus far, even some of the ones that primarily create emotive resonance, are rationally constructed. Extremist narratives do not always follow a form of rationality that is unique only to them. What is very disturbing is that they often follow a form of epistemic rationality that is universally recognisable and sound because it has corroborative evidence. These narratives also make logical deductions or sound inductive analysis and are rationally instrumental in their desired outcome. This is coupled with a social context that is provided to corroborate their reasoning even though the conclusions they propose are morally abhorrent and flawed.

To show how extremist narratives use epistemic and instrumental rationality let us look again at the example of Molly Norris’s facebook cited in *Inspire* issue 1, which had an entry called “*everybody draw Mohamed day.*” It had over 100 000 members. The idea for citing this in *Inspire*, is to prove that there is a ‘war on Islam’ on the basis that ‘the West hates Islam’ which of course gains empirical corroboration by such incidents. You now have epistemic rationality coming into play. This is then used to substantiate ideas of *Al Walla Wal Barra* and the idea that Muslims will never be accepted in the West so do not try to integrate with the ‘enemy.’ The quoting of such injustices from Abu Gharib to the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia as we know is common in extremist discourse. A possible retort might say that this is not symptomatic of a global war on Islam which is an exaggeration that fails to take into consideration the instances of tolerance and respect that is seen in communities. But this retort loses its effect, in light of the ‘evidence’ that

has a social context. The social context here is referring to the Muslim communities which like any community are bound to have grievances. The reasoning also has a clear purpose, to tell Muslims they will never be accepted for what they are. Thus this instrumental reasoning takes into account the fact that in the targeted social environment, there are bound to be Muslims who are marginalised and alienated at one time or another just like anyone in any community. So there is a ready source of support that will help them meet the objective of convincing others that they will never be accepted and there is a war on Islam. It is a message such an audience has already internalised before the narrative which only reinforces and entrenches this belief.

Epistemic and instrumental rationality is best demonstrated in extremist Muslim narratives by the way they do political analysis and critique Western narratives. Take for instance this narrative, "*The Beginning of the end. Abu Mansoor Al-Amriki. Audio reply. A Response to Barack Obama*" which appeared first in the website *alqimmah.net*.

This narrative talks about Obama's Cairo speech. It says that Obama might be seen to be extending his hand to the Muslim world but this is pure rhetoric and that the extremists will not stop until Muslim lands are freed. His tactic is seen as a ruse to win the hearts and minds of Muslims similar to what the crusaders did when they were losing. This tactic is seen as being more deadly than physical attacks. The narrative then lists out hypocrisies between what Obama says and what the US actually does in reality.

Did he forget about the support that America was giving

Saddam (Hussein) while he was massacring Kurds? Did he forget about the million Iraqi children that died during the embargo and sanctions on Iraq? Did he forget about the oppression and murder of the Palestinians, which was made possible by the support and weaponry of America? Did he forget about the many tyrants that America has put into power and supported through all of their evil?⁶⁴⁰

The epistemic rationality here has to be studied in terms of its context. Iraqi children died as a result of shortages during the embargo. The fact there were shortages in Iraq because of the embargo is an epistemic fact to a degree. The fact that many Iraqi children died during this period is also an epistemic fact. The causality between the two is debated. But the message is intended for a Muslim audience that is already outraged by the earlier two empirical facts. Thus the instrumental rationality for connecting these two epistemically rational arguments is meant to leverage on this outrage to create a credible argument. But it is an outrage based on a reality that is a rationally plausible deduction based on the earlier two empirical facts.

In the *Jihad UnSpun* Website, it was written, “*Exploiting the divisions among us has been the number one weapon that the enemies of Islam have successfully used*

⁶⁴⁰ "The Beginning of the end. Abu Mansoor Al-Amriki. Audio reply. A Response to Barack Obama" [Keydka] - Ku soo Dhawoow Golaha Islaamiga ah ee Alqimmah", *Ku soo Dhawoow Golaha Islaamiga ah ee Alqimmah - Powered by vBulletin*, <http://www.alqimmah.net/archive/index.php/t-7975.html> (accessed October 22, 2011).

against us for the past 1200 years.”⁶⁴¹ This may be indicative of the actual instrumental rationality behind the highly quoted concept of *Al wara Wal Bara* concept if it is seen in a context that is less about social exclusion from non-Muslims but rather as a bulwark against a possible divide and conquer strategy being used on Muslims. When Awlaki quotes an actually RAND report that advocates this strategy of *divide et impera*, it only further justifies the instrumental rationality behind the Islamic concept of *Al Wara Wal Bara* as it is used in extremist narratives.

Corroboration can also come in the form of lesser known historical facts. Take this article entitled *Al-Faluja* that appeared in the website *Jerusalamites*.

Within days of the Egyptian forces’ departure, the Israeli invaders dashed to the village and embarked on beating and robbing the civilians. United Nations observers at the scene reported attempts of rapes. Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett personally reprimanded the Israeli army’s chief of staff for the acts committed by the Israeli soldiers against the population. He said that in addition to overt violence, the army conducted a “whispering propaganda” campaign

⁶⁴¹ Website no longer exists, cached version of comment can be seen at: Khadija Abdul Qahaar Jihad, "US Dirty Tricks in Iraq War", *Google*, http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:dEksxezpE_MJ:www.iraq-bangladesh.inbangladesh.com/iraq-pakis-tan.htm+Exploiting+the+divisions+among+us+has+been+the+number+one+weapon+that+the+enemies+of+Islam+have+successfully+used+against+us+for+the+past+1200+years&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=sg (accessed October 22, 2011).

among the Arabs [of al-Faluja], threatening them with attacks and acts of vengeance by the army, which the civilian authorities will be powerless to prevent. There is no doubt that there is a calculated action aimed at increasing the number of those going to the Hebron Hills as if of their own free will, and if possible, to bring about the evacuation of the whole civilian population [of the pocket]. According to the Israeli historian BennyMorris the decision to cause the exodus of the “ Faluja pocket” population was probably approved by Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion.⁶⁴²

Here there is apparent historical corroboration of Israeli aggression against Muslims by the Israeli foreign minister himself. Much of the information is corroborated by Western sources although we see very few Western resources that openly talk about such incidents. Even though there is epistemic rationality in this narrative, it lacks visibility. The sheer lack of visibility of the alternate account of events also might reduce its perceived credibility or actually work in its favour if it is viewed by any counter culture (Muslim extremists in this case) as representing suppressed information. But this does not discount the fact that the information is rationally constructed.

An extremist narrative becomes extremely persuasive when epistemic and instrumental rationality is mixed with *Wertrational* or value/belief-oriented rationality or

⁶⁴² Website article captured 12 April 2009, no longer exists.

affectual rationality (emotive logic)⁶⁴³. Most literature on extremist ideologies has not recognized this explosive mix. To see an exemplification of this in a rather disturbing narrative, take the post shown below taken from the HUT forum. The links they provided in the forum are about IDF (Israeli Defense Force) snipers making t-shirts with pictures which are highly inflammatory and cruel. Some of these include a picture of a Palestinian woman crying over her dead child killed as a result of IDF actions with the slogan, “*Should have used Durex.*” Or of a sniper rifle crosshairs over a pregnant Palestinian woman with the slogan, “*One shot two kills.*” This apparently has been corroborated in mainstream press and if one were to add some balance to the story the Israeli government had taken steps to reprimand the officers concerned. But it was seen as only a placatory and superficial move as the Military Rabbinate in Israel seems to be supportive of the action.⁶⁴⁴ ⁶⁴⁵ The following comment then appeared ⁶⁴⁶,

As a Muslim, when you read something like this it makes
your blood boil but yet people still think the way to respond

⁶⁴³ *Wertrational* or value/belief-oriented rationality (e.g. religious beliefs) & *Affectual* rationality (determined by the emotions of the actor), are two of the Weberian ideal types for rationality. See Max Weber, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, *Economy and society: an outline of interpretive sociology*. Vol. 3, (New York: Bedminster), 1968, 24-25.

⁶⁴⁴ "Israeli Army T-Shirts Mock Gaza Killings – Terrorist fashion 2009 | Sabbah Report", *Sabbah Report / Because Silence is Complicity!*, <http://sabbah.biz/mt/archives/2009/03/21/israeli-army-t-shirts-mock-gaza-killings-terrorist-fashion-2009/> (accessed October 10, 2011).

⁶⁴⁵ Sky News. "Israeli Army T-Shirts Mock Killing Palestinian Women And Children During Gaza Offensive | World News | Sky News", *Sky News, First for Breaking News, Latest News and Video News from the UK and around the World*, http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/World-News/Israeli-Army-T-Shirts-Mock-Killing-Palestinian-Women-And-Children-During-Gaza-Offensive/Article/200903315245946?lpos=World_News_Carousel_Region_2 (accessed September 29, 2011).

⁶⁴⁶ "Gaza Massacre – The Only Solution - Page 3 - Post # 21 dated 20-03-2009, 07:13 PM", *Hizb ut-Tahrir Discussion Forum - Powered by vBulletin*, <http://forum.hizbuttahrir.org/showthread.php?p=17476&highlight=solution+confront+eradicate+cowardly+apes+pigs#post17476> (accessed October 18, 2011).

is to send over a food parcel or two through organisations that don't even have legitimacy in Islam anyway.

The ONLY solution to confront and eradicate these cowardly apes and pigs is for the armies of the Islamic State to fight them and cleanse Palestine of the ba*****s.

Then a religious quote is brought in from the Quran:

“The Unbelievers are protectors, one of another: Unless ye do this, (protect each other), there would be tumult and oppression on earth, and great mischief. (Quran 8:73)”

There are a number of things happening here. One, the report is based on an actual incident that even the Israelis have admitted to. So there is epistemic rationality in this statement. Secondly, it is addressing Muslims who are already sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and who already are feeling disillusioned with activism. They see no viable and realisable effects as a result of their activism (e.g. sending aid etc.) and it certainly does not stop such atrocities from happening. The message being pitched to a particular social context is very clear. Namely, the enemy hates you to the core and does not recognise your humanity. Militancy is thus the only viable solution. The instrumental rationality behind this message is to justify this solution. Following this post, there are a lot of *ad homineum* arguments that vent the emotions this event generates and thereby reinforce the overall argument with affectual rationality.

Finally religious beliefs come in to corroborate and provide the *Wertrational* or value/belief-oriented rationality into the final mix. The most common form of corroboration in extremist Muslim narratives is still religious scriptures by virtue of the frequency of their use and visibility. The point to note about the use of religious quotes for corroboration is its directionality. It is not always a case of scripture saying something and thereafter corresponding action follows. But rather the stance / assertions are made and scriptural evidence is found to support that stance / assertion. Be it predictions about why things are the way they are or about how much ‘the other’ (Non-Muslims and West) hate you and finally divine punishment for not following al-Qaeda’s religious stance. The observable effect or grievance is empirically provable and scripture is contextually used to corroborate this observation. The end result of this overall mix combining logic, emotion and religious corroboration is potent and very persuasive.

Consider finally, this quote by Osama Bin Laden that appeared in the website “*Jihad Unspun*”, “*They (the rulers) have oppressed and humiliate people, have made a mockery of their intellect...*”⁶⁴⁷ This phrase “*Mockery of their intellect*” will appeal to anyone who feels that their ability to think rationally is not only unrecognised but also infantilised by any narrative that equates being critical to being ‘misguided.’ The label of being the one to present a rational argument is now a status symbol and one that is fought

⁶⁴⁷ Website no longer exists, but comment can be also seen in: | Sheikh Osama bin Laden, "Osama Bin Laden's Statement to the Saudi Rulers By Sheikh Osama bin Laden | Translated by Jihad Unspun, December 16, 2004, Posted: 29 May 2005 at 1:29am", *IslamiCity.com - Islam & The Global Muslim eCommunity*, http://www.islamicity.com/forum/forum_posts.asp?TID=1036 (accessed October 22, 2011).

over by both sides of the spectrum.

One of the best examples of epistemic and more importantly instrumental rationality in extremist writings can be seen in the seminal work of Abu Bakr Naji's *"The Management of Savagery."* In section seven of this work, he demonstrated a methodical process by which his study get propagated and how they intend to use violence strategically, (oil well attacks, kidnapping oil company leader etc) and then justify these issues to the masses by citing issues people at the grassroots are concerned with. This can be issues such as how the true value of their commodity (e.g. oil) is not being peculated down to the masses.

His writings recognise the importance of rational arguments. He highlights how Muslim youth are highly critical and need to be convinced outside of emotive arguments. He explains that even though their actions have a rational basis; the positive effects of such actions are reversed by 'hostile' mainstream media.

In the stage of "the power of vexation and exhaustion", we need to polarize the elect among the youth of the Umma, and the best way to do that is through justifying the operations rationally and through the sharia. The highest degree of justification is to justify the act itself by itself. However, in the face of the hostile media it is difficult to create an operation which justifies itself, even if

we could do that when we reached the stage of (being able to) paralyze this media.

Statements through audio or visual media prepare everyone for the operations before they are undertaken—without specification, naturally—and they are justified afterwards through a powerful, rational, sharia-based justification, which the addressed class heeds. These statements should be communicated to all of the people, not just to the elite. Most of the statements should include our general goals which are acceptable to the people, even if they are not stated explicitly: We fight in order to get rid of the enemies of the Umma and their agents who have destroyed the beliefs of the countries and plundered their wealth and made us into their servants.⁶⁴⁸

Such narratives rely on ‘universal values’ and acceptable goals which any reader can identify with. Fighting for freedom, against oppression, against exploitation etc is all part of an argument with an instrumental rationality aimed at achieving resonance with a thinking and discerning audience.

⁶⁴⁸ Abu Bakr Naji, "The Management of Savagery", *The Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University*, www.wcfia.harvard.edu/olin/images/Management%20of%20Savagery%20-%202005-23-2006.pdf (accessed October 22, 2011), section 7, 109

Rational arguments are very difficult to counter unless equally credible and rational arguments are used to defeat it. Superficial arguments that simply reduce the problem to one of emotive elements, religious misinterpretations and misguided or peculiar rationality will continue to skim around the problem but never hit home. This is because they fail to recognise the rational construction of extremist narratives fearing that to do so might actually give it credibility. When in reality to give an intelligent and equally rational counter narrative to hard questions and dilemmas might be the best weapon against extremism.

CHAPTER 9

IMPACT OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND PROPOSED FRAMEWORK TO COUNTER EXTREMIST MUSLIM NARRATIVES.

Deradicalisation and the impact of our findings

Ashour described deradicalisation in terms of two principal components. One required a behavioral change in terms of the strategy and tactics of the group or individual. The other was at the ideological level. His study looked at decradicalisation at the various levels of members in an extremist organization, from sympathizers to the leadership.⁶⁴⁹

Ashour describes a three stage process for de-radicalisation that seems to work with some regional variations. The first process involves a rational choice and cost / benefit calculation on the part of the individual. This is very similar to the case of the JI detainee whose primary impetus for wanting to abandon the ideology had a lot to do with the life oportunites that he had lost as a result of his incarceration.⁶⁵⁰ The next process involves socialization and interaction with the ‘other’ which results in the individual revising and updating their behavior. This would include exposure to other worldviews, perspectives and most importantly- experiences. The third process entails changing perceptions and inducements from the state.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁹ Ashour 2009, 5-6.

⁶⁵⁰ See thesis Chapter 4, pg. 145-147.

⁶⁵¹ Ashour 2009,14,139

Leadership played a major role as it was observed that de-radicalisation of extremist leaders as in the case of ‘Dr Fadl’⁶⁵² created a significant impact that led to de-radicalisation of their followers. Ashour mentions how “*In general, a leadership with theological credentials, a history of “struggle,” and a senior standing in the organization would exert considerable influence...*”⁶⁵³ But this is predicated on the central role played by charismatic leadership if it exists in the first place. In the absence of which, re-radicalisation has a lesser chance for success.⁶⁵⁴ Inducements from the state played an equally major role as can be seen in the status of those who left the extremist world and are now collaborating with their respective states. Not only was there an improvement in their life but their de-radicalizing influence has been felt on other extremists who still remain. Ashour goes on to state that the opposite of this- state repression supported “*the political strains approach and the hypostudy that in Muslim-majority countries, repressive autocrats breed violent theocrats.*”⁶⁵⁵

Ashour emphasized the role of social interactions.⁶⁵⁶ His findings reveal that open discourse in the form of ‘*debates*’ with reformed extremists or pro-regime religious scholars have yielded the best results with the leaders of such extremist Muslim groups rather than the followers. It is possible to deduce from this that the relative presence of an ‘*ideal speech situation,*’ as described has better traction with more ‘educated’ leaders

⁶⁵² Lawrence Wright, "The Rebellion Within: Dr. Fadl, Al Qaeda mastermind, questions terrorism : The New Yorker", *The New Yorker*, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/06/02/080602fa_fact_wright#ixzz1VGAKNPHbhttp://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/06/02/080602fa_fact_wright (accessed August 28, 2011).

⁶⁵³ Ashour 2008, 138

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid,139

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

at the top of an extremist group's hierarchy. By 'educated' this can also entail those with more experience in the worldview and operational realm of Muslim extremism. Having been exposed to such a long term experience and having full view of the ideology that it entails, such individuals are in a better position to discern and come to the realization that in totality the extremist narrative is flawed. Hence, this demonstrates the effectiveness of rational and open discourse in defeating extremist narratives and worldviews by presenting a more credible argument that comes across through the process of unbiased debate. It stands to reason that such discourse may yield better results the closer they approximate the Habermasian '*ideal speech situation.*'

For those further down the Muslim extremist group hierarchy, it is possible that cost benefit calculations over the opportunity cost of remaining in an extremist organization might have a greater effect as demonstrated by the account of the JI extremist in the *Suria* TV Channel Interview. However, it would not be prudent to stratify deradicalisation approaches purely on the basis of the individual's position in the extremist organization. It is also possible that open rational discourse can work with those further down the hierarchy or utilitarian cost benefit calculations do affect those further up the hierarchy.

Therefore an overall approach that frames a case based on both instrumental and epistemic rationality has the potential to create a highly effective counter narrative. This requires being cognizant of the delineated extremist narrative themes based on the ideological, resonance and argumentation cluster that have been described.

There is preponderance for epistemic rationality in narratives that reflect the themes in the ideological cluster. The narrative may leverage on universal values and accepted ideas. It may demonstrate empirically the biasness of mainstream media, highlight true but little known facts or prove the efficacy of extremist methods by presenting how they provide realizable results and viable solutions. The narrative may also show historical precedence to make one realize that they are in a position of supremacy by subscribing to the extremist worldview. Evidence is again provided to prove their claim to awaken the individual to deceptions and conspiracies. Finally these narratives may provide corroborative evidence to expose lackey Muslims and hypocritical leaders by highlighting the flaws in their arguments and actions. All of these themes from the ideological cluster have the potential to create a very persuasive argument that is coherent because it is predicated on epistemic rationality combined with deductive and inductive reasoning to reach plausible conclusions.

The resonance cluster is not totally devoid of rational arguments. There is a clear instrumental rationality in themes that poetically resonate the noble character of Jihadists. These attributes are vouched for by those who know them well. Besides the need to create outrage, there might be empirical demonstrations to make one come to the deductive conclusion that the enemy wants to change Islam and make it subservient. Miracles, wonders and prophecies of jihad and an emphasis on the solidarity and brotherhood behind the Jihadi culture are apparently proven experientially by those in it. The emphasis on being representatives of grassroots concerns the individual can identify with are likewise proven by highlighting shared outcomes and an articulate

understanding of key concerns. When the individual is made conscious that they can never fit in, it is usually corroborated with examples from actual incidents. Emphasising how a defeatist mentality is the self flaggerating source of their downfall gets proven by the empowerment one feels after reversing this mental attitude. Even their detachment from others gets a positive spin as they are now part of the *Ghurraba* (strangers) mentioned in Islamic scriptures. Therefore the sacrifice and choices they make subsequently is indicative of them being part of an elite and divinely blessed “*Chosen*”. This get its validation from mutual reinforcing ideas by those in this in-group who look to how traditionally the ‘chosen’ have always been few and are always persecuted for their beliefs.

The argumentation cluster visibly demonstrates how themes in the ideological and resonance cluster are made more persuasive through the use of rational argumentation techniques. A theme can be made more persuasive by demonstrating the coherence and clarity of the argument and hence its rationality. This is also done by the tactical linking of epistemically rational arguments to create an overall deceptive but persuasive *ignoratio elenchi* argument. The narrative can make the rationality and truth of the argument very plain and clear through a process of simplification and reductionism. It may also resort to revealing empirically provable flaws in the opponent’s argument instead. Finally it can be a purely rational argument that gives a highly corroborative empirical analysis with well built deductive or inductive reasoning to come to a logical conclusion. Let us now revisit the diagram (fig. 1) that was presented at the start of this study.

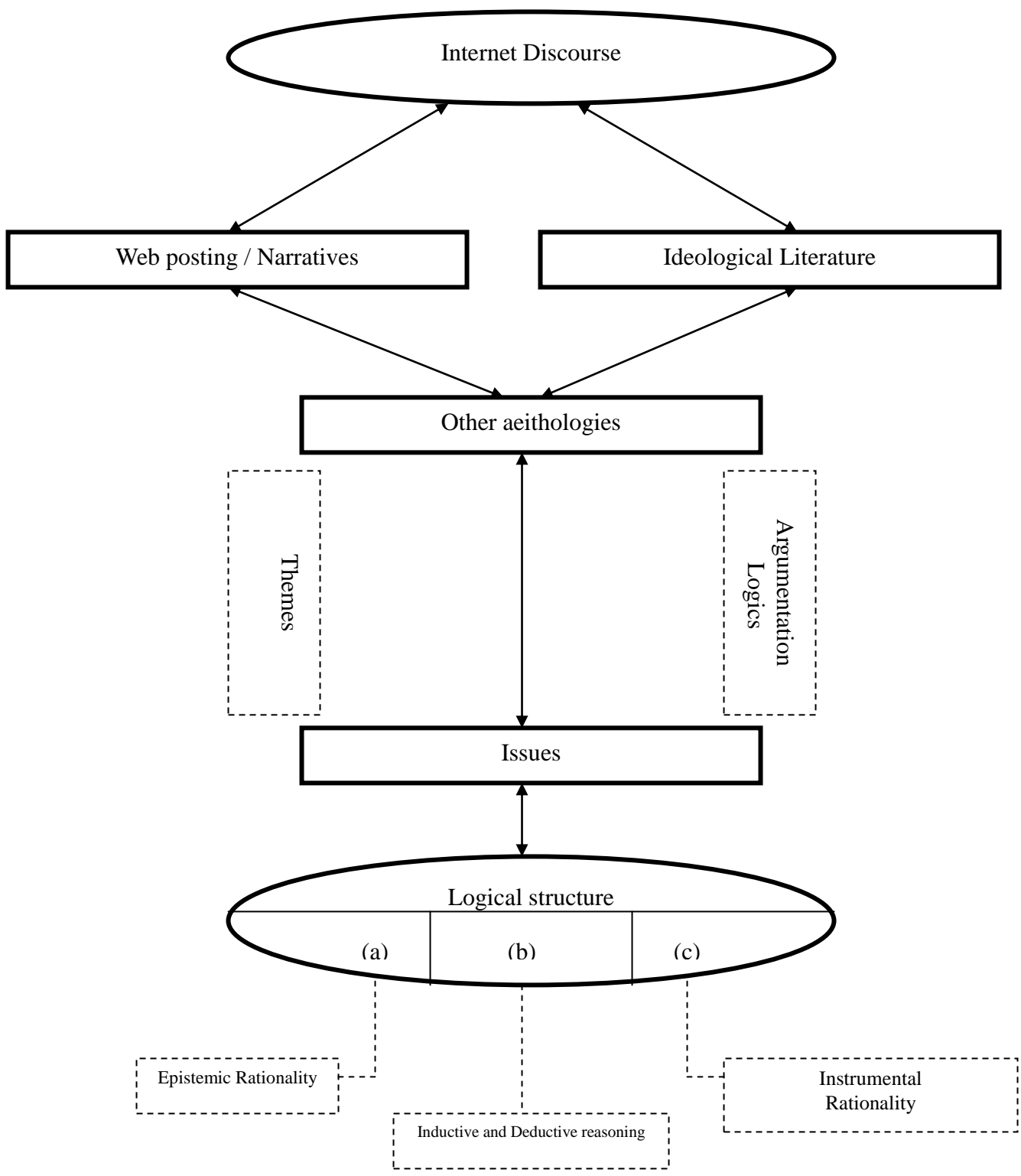


Fig 1. Graphical illustration of the 'logical structure' process that generates appeal for extremist Muslim ideologies and end state solutions. (Bidirectional arrows indicate the two way flow of influence and counter-influence.

Starting from the top, the internet narratives constituting discourse, web postings and ideological literature are influenced by other aetiologies such as the social and psychological conditions of the reader's profile. All of which reinforce each other. Contemporary issues that create an impact in the lives of Muslims mutually reinforce these social psychological aetiologies. These constituent elements and factors in the persuasion process are framed through the use of themes (Ideological and Resonance cluster) and argumentation logics. (Argumentation cluster) All of which are predicated in the first instance by the presence of a 'Logical structure', which is the well spring from which rational arguments in the various themes described be they epistemic, instrumental, deductive or inductive originate.

Therefore to construct an effective counternarrative on-line, it is vital that this 'logical structure' be taken into cognizance. This is done not with the intent to validate the arguments of extremists but to provide an effective counternarrative that is argued rationally and thus more persuasive. The last thing we should do, is to argue the matter in an infantilizing and superficial manner just for the sake of ensuring that nothing extremists say is validated. On this matter of superficial arguments, Ashour says it best by citing how,

A counter-narrative built for the American Ku Klux Klan should look quite different from one built to counter Al-Qaeda's ideology, despite a few superficial parallels between them. Oversimplification, shallowness, and generic

counter-narratives should be avoided, as these invite successful “strike-backs.” The content of the message should also be attractive, admitting the validity of some or all of the grievances (depending on the case), offering alternative ways to address those grievances, in addition to highlighting the legitimacy and effectiveness of non-violent strategies.⁶⁵⁷

By highlighting evidence that demonstrates the existence of the ‘logical structure’ in extremist Muslim narratives, this study emphasises the need to incorporate this missing link into present counter narratives and to factor the various themes described.

A proposed framework to counter extremist Muslim Narratives

To illustrate how the ‘logical structure’ of extremist narratives can be defeated, let us take the sensitive issue of headscarves worn by Muslim women. This non-criminal act has been leveraged on by both extreme sides of the spectrum. The discourse on this might take the form of highly emotive arguments, religious citations, appeals to rights, the need for a common national identity, the propensity to create an insular mindset against secular society, going against social cohesion etc. Extremists will capitalise on this situation to purport their ideologies, linking this issue with many others and using all the other forms of arguments that were mentioned in this study. Ultimately such

⁶⁵⁷ Omar Ashour, "Online De-Radicalisation? Countering Violent Extremist Narratives: Message, Messenger and Media Strategy", *Perspectives on Terrorism* 4, no. 6 (2010): 17, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/articles/issues/PTv4i6.pdf> (accessed August 26, 2011).

arguments propose militant violence or leaving the entire mainstream social order. All other forms of arguments might explode the issue but at the heart of it all, it stems from a 'logical structure' that the wearing of the headscarf by itself is not a criminal act. The question is over context and the answer is situational.

The problem is that in many countries, this issue has been attacked on ideological and cultural grounds while forgetting that this issue in isolation is benign. But extremists will ride on this logical structure and link it with other forms of arguments to spiral the issue into multiple dimensions. To them, it is no longer about the headscarf; it is a war against Islam that can have only one form of response. So instead of countering the argument and attacking the issue itself, energies will be better spent in finding credible and viable alternatives. Both sides can maintain their stance and seek a middle ground where reason and co-operation, despite differences, can thrive. For instance, the state can maintain the ground that headscarfs cannot be allowed in secular schools but then help to make Madrasahs adopt mainstream education including elements of national education to a much greater degree. It must also work from the side of Muslims. They can carry on with their personal prerogative to move to a Madrasah, but the Madrasahs can take the initiative to implement programs that will make them collaborate with mainstream schools in joint projects (e.g. a common sports day, carnival, joint educational projects etc.)

These viable alternatives more than anything will remove the bite from extremists who capitalise on the logical structure to explode an otherwise reasonable grievance or

request into something else entirely. It starts with actively recognising cogent and rationale arguments and not just humouring them at the surface. This should move onto promoting critical discourse to find the elusive middle ground.

Extremist narratives present many choices for Muslims that would lead them eventually to the nightmarish world of militancy and terrorism. Recognizing the presence and critical role of the logical structure is a first step in implementing solutions that present rational counter arguments and realizable alternative choices that appeal to Muslims or anyone for that matter. This is ultimately aimed at bringing back extremist Muslims to the mainstream fold or to prevent Muslims from ever embarking on the road to extremism in the first place. This entails making potential Muslim extremists realize that they are not '*chosen*' for a purpose they think is right but rather there are other credible and viable '*choices*' which will lead them down a different but better path.

End.

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Osecular%2520and%2520the%2520modern-
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Annex A: Quranic Verses Often Cited in Extremist Narratives.

1. Quran Verse 2, (Al-Baqara): 120 and its context is apparently found in Verse 2:40. *'Never will the Jews and Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion...'* (This prior context is not explained clearly by Dr Ismaeel, except that it is as a result of this.) Verse 2:40 – *'O children of Israel! Call to mind the (special) favour which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil my covenant with you, and fear none but Me.'*

2. ⁶⁵⁸ Quran Verse 9, (At-Tawbah): 9-29, 73, 111, 123 -

(9) : *They have exchanged the signs of Allah for a small price and averted [people] from His way. Indeed, it was evil that they were doing.*

(12): *And if they break their oaths after their treaty and defame your religion, then fight the leaders of disbelief, for indeed, there are no oaths [sacred] to them; [fight them that] they might cease.*

(13): *Would you not fight a people who broke their oaths and determined to expel the Messenger, and they had begun [the attack upon] you the first time? Do you fear them? But Allah has more right that you should fear Him, if you are [truly] believers.*

(14): *Fight them; Allah will punish them by your hands and will disgrace them and give you victory over them and satisfy the breasts of a believing people*

(29): *Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture - [fight] until they give the jizyah willingly while they are humbled.*

(73): *O Prophet, fight against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be harsh upon them. And their refuge is Hell, and wretched is the destination.*

⁶⁵⁸ Sahih International translation.

(111): Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah , so they kill and are killed. [It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah ? So rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that which is the great attainment.

(123): O you who have believed, fight those adjacent to you of the disbelievers and let them find in you harshness. And know that Allah is with the righteous.

3. ⁶⁵⁹ Quran Verse 5, (Al-Maaida): 51-52. –

(51) “O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.

(52) So you see those in whose hearts is disease hastening into [association with] them, saying, "We are afraid a misfortune may strike us." But perhaps Allah will bring conquest or a decision from Him, and they will become, over what they have been concealing within themselves, regretful.

4. Quran Verse 3, (Al-Imraan): 118 - “you who believe! Take not as (your) Bitdnah (advisors, consultants, protectors, helpers, friends, etc.) those outside your religion (pagans, Jews, Christians, and hypocrites) since they will not fail to do their best to corrupt you. They desire to harm you severely.”⁶⁶⁰

5. Quran Verse 60, (Al-Mumtahinah): 1 – ‘O ye who believe! Take not my enemies and yours as friends (or protectors)....take them not as friends, holding secret converse of love (and friendship) with them...

⁶⁵⁹ Sahih International translation.

⁶⁶⁰ “Tafsir of Al Quran”, *ummah.com discussion forums*, www.ummah.com/forum/showthread.php?187749-Tafsir-of-Al-Quran-3-118-119- (accessed September 18 2010).

6. Quran Verse 8, (Al-Anfaal): 60 - *'Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies...'*
7. Quran Verse 4 (An-Nisaa): 75 on Apathy against fighting. *'And why should ye not fight in the cause of Allah and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? – Men, women, and children, whose cry is: "Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from thee one who will protect; and raise for us from thee one who will help!'*
8. Quran Verse 4, (An- Nisaa): 140 *'...when ye hear the signs of Allah held in defiance and ridicule, ye are not to sit with them...'*

Annex B: Web Clusters defined by Chen et al, University of Arizona, Artificial Intelligence lab

1. Hizballah Cluster
2. Palestinian Cluster
3. Al Qaeda Cluster
4. Caucasian Cluster
5. Jihad Supporters
6. Hizb-Ut-Tahrir
7. Tanzeem-e-Islami Cluster

Annex C: Categories used in the NEFA website:

1. Translations/Transcriptions of Statements by Al-Qaida Leadership
2. Translations/Transcriptions of Statements by Iraqi Insurgent Groups
3. Translations/Transcriptions of Documents from Terrorist Groups: Afghanistan
4. Translations/Transcriptions of Documents from Terrorist Groups: Chechnya
5. Translations/Transcriptions of Documents from Terrorist Groups: Europe
6. Translations/Transcriptions of Documents from Terrorist Groups: Israel/Palestinian Territories/Lebanon
7. Translations/Transcriptions of Documents from Terrorist Groups: North Africa
8. Translations/Transcriptions of Documents from Terrorist Groups: Pakistan
9. Translations/Transcriptions of Documents from Terrorist Groups: Somalia
10. Translations/Transcriptions of Documents from Terrorist Groups: Yemen
11. Translations/Transcriptions of Documents from Terrorist Groups: Cyberterror
12. Translations/Transcriptions of Documents from Terrorist Groups: Miscellaneous
13. Translations/Transcriptions of Statements by the Muslim Brotherhood

Annex D: Main Websites Chosen for analysis

S/ n o.	Website Af- filiation	Web Address
1	Al Bashra Iraq	http://www.albasrah.net/index1.html
2	Al -Ghurraba	http://www.alghurabaa.org/
3	Al Imam	http://www.al-imam.net/
4	Al Muhaji- roun	www.muha-jiroun.com (Website Closed)
5	Ansar al- Mujahideen / Ansar A Ji- had Network	Arabic Forum Mirrors German Forum RSS Feeds www.as-ansar.com/vb www.ansarnet.info www.ansar1.net https://www.ansarnet.info https://www.ansar1.net www.de.ansar1.net Ansar AlJihad English
6	Arrahmah	http://arrahmah.com/
7	At- Tibyan Publications	http://tibyan.wordpress.com/
8	Barisan Jihad	http://barisanjihad.wordpress.com/
9	Cageprison- ers	http://www.cageprisoners.com/
10	Clearguid- ance	http://clearguidance.blogspot.com/
11	Dark Web Discussion Forums & others.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ansar 1 2. Gawaher 3. HUT Forum 4. Islamic Awakening 5. MyIWC 6. Turn to Islam Forum 7. Ummah.com

12	Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades	http://www.qassam.ps/aboutus.html
13	Free Gaza	http://www.freegaza.org/
14	Gawaher	http://www.gawaher.com/
15	Hidayatullah	http://www.hidayatullah.com/
16	Hizb Ut Ta- hrrir	http://www.hizbuttahrir.org/
17	'Inspire' – the English Language Magazine of Al-Qaeda	Issue 1 : Summer 2010 Issue 2: Fall 2010 Issue 3: Special Issue, Nov 2010, Operation Hemorrhage. Issue 4: Winter 2010. Issue 5: Spring 2011, “The Tsunami of Change” – issue focusing on the ‘Arab Spring.’ Issue 6: Summer 2011, Issue focused on Martyrs and Death of Osama Bin Laden.
18	Inshallahsha- heed – Samir Khan’s Blog	http://inshallahshaheed.blogspot.com/
19	Islam Future	http://islamfuture.wordpress.com/
20	Islamic Awakening	http://forums.islamicawakening.com/
21	Islamic Net- work	http://talk.islamicnetwork.com/
22	Islamic Re- sistance in Lebanon Hizbollah	http://www.english.moqawama.org/
23	Islamicweb	http://www.islamicweb.com
24	Jerusalamites	http://www.jerusalemities.org/

25	Jerusalem Forum	http://www.jerusalemites.org/?page_id=4
26	Jihad Unspun	http://www.jihadunspun.com/home.php
27	Khilafa.com	http://www.khilafah.com/
28	Kavkaz Center	http://kavkazcenter.com/eng/
29	Minbar of tawheed and jihad	http://www.tawhed.net/
30	MPACUK	http://www.mpacuk.org/
31	NEFA Foundation (See Annex B)	http://www.nefafoundation.org/
32	Palestineinfo.com	http://www.palestine-info.co.uk/
33	Palestinian Islamic Jihad	http://www.nedayequds.com/
34	Qoqaz Chechnya	http://www.justicefornorthcaucasus.com/jfnc_message_boards/chechnya.php?entry_id=1180681380&title=www.qoqaz.com%3A-they-said-about-chechnya&comments=comments; Formerly: www.qoqaz.com
35	Revolution Muslim	http://revolutionmuslim.blogspot.com/
36	Salafiyyah Jadeedah	http://salafiyyah-jadeedah.tripod.com/
37	SawatulIslam	http://www.sawtulislam.com/ (Website Shut Down)
38	sayfullaah.blogspot	http://sayfullaah.blogspot.com

	ot.com																																	
39	Tanzeem e Islami	http://www.tanzeem.org/																																
40	The ignored Puzzle pieces of knowledge	http://ignoredknowledge.blogspot.com/2007/10/temporary-blog.html ; http://abumubarak.blogspot.com/2007/10/ignored-puzzle-pieces-of-knowledge.html Old posts recovered from internet archives.																																
41	The unjust-media.com	http://theunjustmedia.com/																																
42	Youtube Lectures and Discussion Forums.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th><u>Youtube Video Title</u></th> <th><u>Author</u></th> <th><u>Remarks</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>A Message to those concerned</td> <td>As - Sahab Production</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>From Ibn Muljam to Ibn Laden</td> <td>Abdul Malik Al Akhdar</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Jihad</td> <td>Anwar Al Awlaki</td> <td>Discussion Forum posts Examined</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Jihad is our Religion</td> <td>Anwar Al Awlaki</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>Weapons of the End Times</td> <td>Anwar Al Awlaki</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>Jihad in Chechnya and Somalia</td> <td>Ayman Al Zawahiri</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>Jihad in Darfur</td> <td>Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Al Zawahiri</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		<u>Youtube Video Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Remarks</u>	1	A Message to those concerned	As - Sahab Production		2	From Ibn Muljam to Ibn Laden	Abdul Malik Al Akhdar		3	Jihad	Anwar Al Awlaki	Discussion Forum posts Examined	4	Jihad is our Religion	Anwar Al Awlaki		5	Weapons of the End Times	Anwar Al Awlaki		6	Jihad in Chechnya and Somalia	Ayman Al Zawahiri		7	Jihad in Darfur	Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Al Zawahiri	
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7	Jihad in Darfur	Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Al Zawahiri																																

		8	O Muslims Report for Duty!”		
		9	Rulings on living in a Non-Muslim Country	Anwar Al Awlaki	
		10	Soldiers of Allah	Anwar Al Awlaki	
		11	The Battle for hearts and minds” –	Anwar Al Awlaki	
		12	Suicide operation or shadah	Shaikh al-Albaanee	
		13	Soldiers of Allah	Soldiers of Allah	Discussion Forum posts Examined
		14	Muslims for Life	Soldiers of Allah	
		15	Shaikh al-Albaanee On Jihaad In Our Times 1 2	Shaikh al-Albaanee	
		16	The Honor of a Single Muslim		
		17	The wolf, the sheep and the lamb	Osama Bin Laden	
		18	To the Muslim Youth	Ayman Al Zawahiri	
		19	WHAT ABOUT THAT ! I'M ABU DUJANA!	Anwar Al Awlaki	
		20	What Hassan Al-Banna said about Jihad	Muhammad Sheikh	
		21	Diets of the Mujahideen	Anwar al Al Awlaki	

		22	Jihad Fi Sabilillah	Anwar al-Awlaki	Discussion Forum posts Examined
		23	KhanQaida's Channel		
		24	Prepare Yourself (Part 1-5)	Sheikh Feiz Muhammad	
		25	They will be defeated	Anwar al Al Awlaki	
		26	Latest Interview	Anwar al Al Awlaki	
		27	A Call to Jihad	Anwar al Al Awlaki	Discussion Forum posts Examined
		28	The enemies of Allah	Anwar al Al Awlaki	
		29	What is Jihad – A Muslim Perspective	Anwar al Al Awlaki	
		30	Book of Jihad	Anwar al Al Awlaki	
		31	Brutality against Muslims	Anwar al Al Awlaki	
		32	Asbab	Anwar al Al Awlaki	
		33	The Dust will never settle	Anwar al Al Awlaki	
		34	Mashari	Anwar al Al Awlaki	
		35	State of the Ummah	Anwar al Al Awlaki	
		36	Allah is Preparing us for Victory	Anwar al Al Awlaki	Discussion Forum posts Examined
		37	True Warrior	Anwar al Al Awlaki	Discussion Forum posts

				Examined
		38	Meaning of Jihad	Anwar al Al Awlaki
		39	Its a War Against Islam	Anwar al Al Awlaki Discussion Forum posts Examined
		40	The battle of the hearts and minds	Anwar al Al Awlaki
		41	Who is Abdulmutallab?	CBS News online Discussion Forum posts Examined

Annex E: Sample List of some of the major Muslim Extremist Ideological literature found on the Internet that were examined

Title	Ideologue	Ideologue / Author / Source details
1. Defense of the Muslim Lands: The First obligation after Iman.	Abdullah Azzam	Mentor of Osama Bin Laden / Internet
2. Signs of ar-Rahman in the Jihad in Afganistan	Abdullah Azzam	Mentor of Osama Bin Laden / Al-Ghurraba Website. Edited by A.B. al-Mehri MAKTABAH BOOKSELLERS AND PUBLISHERS Birmingham – England www.maktabah.net
3. The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Ummah Will Pass	Abu Bakr Naji	He was a frequent contributor in the al-Qaeda magazine, Sawt al-Jihad (The Voice of jihad), • http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/olin/images/Management%20of%20Savagery%20-%202005-23-2006.pdf • http://gypsyscholarship.blogspot.com/2006/07/abu-bakr-najis-management-of-

		savagery_18.html
4. Oh hesitant one, it's an obligation.	Abu Dujanah al-Khurasani	<p>Inspire Issue 2 (Transcription), Fall 2010</p> <p><i>Actual Name: Humam Khalil Abu Mulal al-Balawi.</i></p> <p>http://online.wsj.com/article/SB126264256099215443.html</p> <p><i>“Mr. Balawi, a doctor of <u>Palestinian</u> origin who had worked in a Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan, blew himself up on Dec. 30 (2009) at a C.I.A. base in Khost, in eastern Afghanistan near the Pakistani border. American officials have described him as a double agent who was taken onto the base in Afghanistan because the C.I.A. hoped he might be able to deliver top members of Al Qaeda’s network, according to Western government officials.”</i></p> <p>http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/10/world/middleeast/10balawi.html</p>

5. Which is Better Martyrdom or victory?	Abu Khowla	Inspire Issue 4 Winter 2010
6. The Beginning of the end. Audio reply. A Response to Barack Obama”	Abu Mansoor Al- Amriki.	alqimmah.net Actual name: Omar Shafik Hammami, an American who went to join <u><i>al-Shabaab</i></u> in Somalia
7. Why did I choose al-Qaeda. Part 1, 2 & 3.	Abu Musab al-Awlaki	Inspire Issue 4, 5 & 6
8. The Schools of Jihad. 9. The open fronts and individual initiative. 10. The military theory of Open fronts. 11. Individual Terrorism Jihad. 12. Conditions for the resistance to use individual Jihad	Abu Musab al-Suri	Inspire 1, 2, 4, 5 & 6 <i>“...his real name is Mustafa Setmariam Nasar. He became involved in politics at the University of Aleppo, where he studied engineering. Later, he moved to Jordan, where he joined the Muslim Brotherhood...”</i> Moved to Spain, where he got married, then onto Afganistan where he met OBL and became part of the Al-Qaeda inner council. Helped establish the terrorist cell that played a role in the 9/11 attacks. http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/09/11/060911fa_fact3?printable=true

		http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/09/11/060911fa_fact3?printable=true#ixzz1Wxg96KrI
13. The way Forward	Abu Suhail	Inspire Issue 5, likely to refer to Adam Gadahn; http://www.terroristplanet.com/pr/files_gadahn.htm
14. Transcript of the video: Why do we wage Jihad –	Abu Sulayman Al-Utaibi	Ansar 1 Web Forum.
15. Its either Jihad or Disgrace so choose.	Abu Yahya al-Libi	Inspire Issue 6, high ranking official and top strategist for Al-Qaeda, one of those who escaped from Bagram airbase in Afganistan in 2005. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/04/world/asia/04qaeda.html?_r=1&oref=slog_in
16. The Middle Path	Abu Yahya al-Libi	Inspire Issue 5

and the Enemy's plot.		
17. Know that Jihad is your duty.	Adam Gadahn	Inspire Issue 4, An American senior operative in al-Qaeda, actual name Adam Pearlman.
18. 44 ways of supporting Jihad,	Anwar Al Awlaki	Available in the al-Ghurraba website. The prominent American ideologue within al-Qaeda. Said to have inspired the Fort Hood Shooter (2009), Maj. Nidal Hassan, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the bomber who hid explosives in his underwear on board a TWA flight (2009) and the Times Square Bomber (2010), Faisal Shahzad.
19. A call to Jihad	Anwar Al Awlaki	Video Lecture on Youtube
20. Allah is preparing us for victory	Anwar Al Awlaki	Video Lecture on Youtube
16. Allah is preparing us for Victory	Anwar Al Awlaki	Video Lecture on Youtube
21. It's a war against Islam	Anwar Al Awlaki	Video Lecture on Youtube, also available on al-Ghurraba website

22. Jihad is our religion	Anwar Al Awlaki	Video Lecture on Youtube
23. The Battle of Hearts and Mind	Anwar Al Awlaki	Video Lecture on Youtube, also available on Kavkaz.com
24. The Prize awaiting the Shahid	Anwar Al Awlaki	Inspire Issue 2 (Transcription)
25. Weapons of the end Times	Anwar Al Awlaki	Video Lecture on Youtube
26. The short and long term plans after Protests & The overlooked Backdrop	Ayman al-Zawahiri	Inspire Issue 5, Present Leader of Al-Qaeda.
27. Prepare Yourself	Feiz Muhammad	Video Lecture on Youtube, Australian Extremist Muslim Preacher.
28. Al-Saud: lodging a criminal	Ibrahim al-Rubaish	Inspire Issue 5, Actual name: Ibrahim Sulayman Muhammad Arbaysh, Formerly incarcerated in Guantanamo bay then transferred to Saudi Arabia. He escaped and is now supposedly a religious ideologue leader for al-Qaeda

		http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2009/12/04/Former-GITMO-detainee-now-al-Qaida-brass/UPI-74051259944600/
34. Interview: <i>"All that is happening today is a mirage"</i>	Interviewee: Abdul-Malik	Source: Prague Watchdog Kavkaz Center
35. <i>"Interview with the Sheikh Abu Baker Ba'ashir Regarding Obama's Speech to the Islamic World, and some Other Affairs"</i>	Interviewee: Abu Baker Ba'ashir	Jihad Voice in Nusantara:
36. Interview : <i>"The aim of war is defined. It became clear who oppose who"</i>	Interviewee: Saad Minkailov	V.Khasanov: <i>"The interview was led by the independent journalist of Vakha Khasanaov.</i> <i>Department of letters,</i>

		<i>Kavkaz Center</i> ”
37. If Jihad Suddenly Stopped	Kavkaz Center	JamaatShariat.com Kavkaz Center
29. The Oppresors End.	Muhammad ibn Abd al Qadir al Murshedi	Inspire Issue 5
30. Until we taste what Hamzah ibn Abdul Muttalib tasted.	Osama Bin Laden	Inspire 2 (Transcription)
31. The Central Issue.	Samir Khan	Inspire Issue 4, Prominent Cyber Jihadist from the US who left for Yemen and is now part of AQAP and its media arm, <i>al-Malahim media</i> . He is the principal author of the AQAP Inspire magazine. http://www.adl.org/main_Terrorism/inspire_issue_5_aqap.htm
32. The Egyptian	Samir Khan	Inspire Issue 5
33. Limaadhal-Jihaad? (Why Jihaad?)	'Umar Mahmood Muhammed 'Uthmaan Abu 'Umar, known commonly as Abu Qataadah al-	Sallafiah Jadeedah website, also known as Umar Mahmood Aboo Umar.

	Philisteeni.	
34. The West Should ban the Niqab covering its real face.	Yahya Ibrahim	Inspire Issue 1, Editor of the Inspire Magazine. http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/5153.htm
35. Sheikh Qaradawi's Jumu'ah Khutbah: "I am a Terrorist" <i>"If everyone who defends his land, and dies defending his sacred symbols is considered a terrorist, then I wish to be at the forefront of the terrorists."</i> By Dr. Hasan Ali Daba	Sheikh Qaradawi	"Jihad Unspun" Website. He is included as some of his views are sympathetic of Palestenian Suicide Bombings but condemns outright terrorism. His controversial views are bordering on extremism and are also cited in extremist Muslim Websites. http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=4&section=0&article=53683&d=30&m=10&y=2004

Annex F: Geographical and movement type clusters for extremist Muslim narratives

Webcluster	Pro Al Qaeda Jihadist / South Asian Cluster	Iranian revolutionary cluster	Palestinian / Iraqi Cluster	Activist Cluster	South East Asian Cluster	Chechnyan Cluster / Africa
1	Minbar of Tawheed and Jihad	http://www.hizbollah.org	http://www.palestine-info.co.uk/en/	http://www.khilafah.com	http://www.hidayatullah.com (Malay)	http://www.kavkazcenter.com (pro-Chechen)
2	Salaafiyah Jadeedah.com	http://english.maqawama.org/index.php	http://www.alqasam.ps/english/ (Hamas)	www.hizb-uttahrir.org (Hizb Ut Tahrir Global site)	http://www.ardmahcom.wordpress.com (Malay)	As-Shahab (Africa) related content
3	http://www.cageprisoners.com		Islamic Resistance In Lebanon - Official Web Site	http://www.clearguidance.blogspot.com (From Archives)*		
4	IslamicAwakening.Com		Jerusalemites.org	www.Al-Ghurabaa.org - Successor of Omar Bakhri's Al-Muhajiroun movement. Used for getting Imam Anwar al-Awlaki articles		

5	http://www.jihadunspun.com		www.uruknet.info o (IRAQ)	IslamicAwakening.com		
6	Ansar AlJihad Network www.As-Ansar.com http://ansarnet.info		www.albasrah.net t (IRAQ)	www.gawaher.com *		
7	http://onlinejihad.blogspot.com			http://forums.almaghrib.org *		
8	http://pathofartyrdom.blogspot.com *			http://inshallahshaheed.muslimpad.com The ignored puzzle pieces of knowledge. Samir Khan – An American pro Jihadist who website was shut down.		
9	http://www.tanzeem.org					
10	You tube Forums – KhanQaida's channel. *					
11`	'Inspire' – the English					

	Language Magazine of Al-Qaeda					
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* = Discussion Forums

Annex G: Definition & coding rule for the themes

	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Cluster</u>	<u>Definition and Coding Rule</u>
1	“The Accepted Idea.”	Ideological	The narrative makes reference to widely accepted ideas from academia, mainstream political discourse, or from prominent personalities that are accepted by the Western world.
2	“Appealing to Universal Values.”	Ideological	The narrative emphasizes, alludes or appeals to values or concepts that are considered universal. Values: e.g.: courage, camaraderie, dedication etc. Concepts: e.g.: Freedom of speech, right of self determination, etc.
3	“Biasness of Mainstream Media.”	Ideological	The narrative corroborates with examples of hypocrisy or biasness in media reports by Western sources or those issued by the state. It will also highlight instances when alternative perspectives are suppressed or information is hidden to give an incomplete picture of the issue / event.
4	“True but little	Ideological	The narrative intends to ‘shock’ the reader to an unknown or little publicized piece of information. It can also mention how this

	known.”		information is suppressed, made less visible or discredited.
5	“Realisable results and viable solutions.”	Ideological	The narrative cites how past actions or plans have failed or have suggested solutions that are not feasible or realizable. It then proposes a counter argument in which the practicality and real world viability of the proposed solution is emphasized.
6	“Seeing past the ruse – creating consciousness.”	Ideological	The narrative presents an alternate scenario, or interpretation of events that the reader has not considered before. It will highlight the ‘real’ intentions of the ‘official’ narrative that will anger the reader.
7	“From Weak to Powerful to Supremacist.”	Ideological	The narrative emphasizes on the downtrodden state of the targeted group. Or the reader is awakened to the idea that he or she is actually superior to their oppressors. It can also remind the readers of a past in which one reigned supreme.

8	“The Con- spiracy.”	Ideological	A carefully constructed rational argument with empirical corroboration to prove the conspiracy. It will also detail the steps taken to hide the conspiracy and what the guilty party hopes to gain by hiding the truth.
9	“Lackey Muslims and Hypo- critical leaders.	Ideological	The narrative will show evidence as to how mainstream, state sanctioned Muslim leaders or those in positions of authority and power conform to official lines, never critique or question the official line or support Western political actions that have incited Muslims at the grassroots.
10	“Noble Character of the Ji- hadist.”	Resonance	The narrative either targets a prominent extremist Muslim ideologue, a Jihadist figure (from Islam’s classical past or from contemporary times) or Jihadists in general. The qualities range from personal attributes like humility and honesty to traits exhibited by their actions, either in battle or in everyday life.
11	“They want to Change Islam to be	Resonance	The narrative espouses incidents and issues in which the West or the state is seen to meddle or influence how Islam is interpreted

	subservient and passive.”		and practiced. Instances when a passive form of Islam is accepted and propagated while any form of critique or resistance is deemed negatively are highlighted.
12	“The Culture, mysticism and miracles of Jihad.”	Resonance	The Jihadist culture encompassing elements such as camaraderie, the excitement and experience of battle are narrated. Mystical elements that happen before, during and after the battles are described.
13	“Prophecy.”	Resonance	Prophecy relates to what is said in Islamic scriptures being used to explain past, current and future events and issues. There is usually corroborative evidence to ‘prove’ the prophecy.
14	“We represent Grassroots concerns.”	Resonance	The narrative recognizes and highlights issues concerning everyday Muslims or describes how populist support from the people is given to Jihadists.
15	“You can never fit in.”	Resonance	The narrative describes instances where attempts to conform to secular society have failed despite genuine attempts to integrate.

			It will emphasize how much Muslims are hated by non-Muslims and how entrenched it is. It may also describe how this hate is manifested in policies affecting Muslims.
16	“Do not become defeatist.”	Resonance	The narrative describes how Muslims are actually powerful enough to change their status quo. It is slated to be very encouraging and will show instances of how the West or the state has created a situation where the Muslim will feel inferior and not capable of going against them. The narrative may also cite how peaceful co-existence, conformance or activism is a reflection of this defeatist mindset.
17	“Al-Ghuraaba: The Stranger.”	Resonance	The narrative relates to the Islamic concept of the stranger who is an outcast due to his faith and conviction. It will relate to how this estranged individual is actually in a better position as God favors him or her for the conviction to stand up for one’s beliefs and isolate oneself from mainstream society if needs be.

18	“The Chosen.”	Resonance	The narrative describes how one is or will be imbued with exceptional qualities for choosing to take the path of resistance. It will highlight how ‘special’ and fortunate this individual is. The hardships one will face for being part of the chosen may also be narrated along with the final reward for being steadfast in one’s beliefs. The narrative may also appeal to one’s sense of moral duty and altruism as there is no one to help the downtrodden Muslim and only someone special will be chosen or choose to do something about it.
19	“Clarity of purpose.” (Rational Argument)	Argumentation	The narrative may be framed to appear both simple and coherent in its logic and argument, uncompromising despite pressures, little or no ambiguity in identifying the causes or in the objectives to be met and finally leveraging on clear and valid issues while providing seemingly concrete solutions. The narrative may also instill a sense of clear purpose in the reader.

20	<p>“Linking verifiable ‘truths’ to form an <i>ignoratio elenchi</i> argument. (Sophist / Rational argument)</p>	Argumentation	<p>The narrative is constructed by using a series of accepted, corroborative or empirical facts to lead to a conclusion that is not the actual state of events but more the end state or objective the narrator wants to achieve.</p>
21	<p>“Reductionism.” (Rational argument)</p>	Argumentation	<p>The narrative reduces the argument to its ‘bare bones’ to show how at the simplistic level it is proven to be true and therefore the more complex issue is likewise true. Analogies are the most common mechanisms used in this argumentation theme.</p>
22	<p>“We know what you are saying about us and this is</p>	Argumentation	<p>The narrative captures the common or likely criticism to be leveled against it and address it directly or resorts to creating a corroborated rational argument against the criticizer’s position instead.</p>

	<p>what we say to that.” (Dialectical / Rational Argument)</p>		
23	<p>“Corroborat ive and Empirical analysis.” (Rational argument)</p>	Argumentation	<p>A purely rational argument in the narrative that is clear in its final objective, has logical steps coherently described to meet them and has empirical or corroborative evidence to back up claims.</p>

(Coding Agenda, adapted from Mayring 2000: 6)

Annex H: Content analysis illustration:- Kavkaz center website article

Original text:



SEARCH

Mon., 13.12.1430 Hjr / 30.11.2009, 12:04 Djokhar time

RU EN TR UA

- Home
- Umma
- Caucasus
- World
- Russia
- All events
- Analysis
- Interview
- Opinion
- Photo
- Video
- Islam
- About us
- Donation
- Cooperation
- Feedback
- Archive of 2001

CAUCASUS » INTERVIEW

"All that is happening today is a mirage" (interview with a Chechen Mujahid)

Publication time: 21 April 2009, 12:08



Prague Watchdog edition published an interview with one of the Mujahideen commanders of the Caucasus Emirate, Abdul-Malik. The interview was translated from Chechen into Russian, and from Russian into Eng-

lish.

Prague Watchdog: Do you think that it's normal for Chechens to be killing Chechens?

Abdul-Malik: We really didn't want this kind of war, and at first we did everything we could to avoid it. But the Russians are pushing the Kadyrovites onto the front line and conducting ambushes against us. The Kadyrovites are themselves trying every means of gaining favour with the Russians. I warned the man whom I killed. But he did not listen; instead he mobilized and started shooting at us. His cousin is here with us. And he says that this policeman almost took pride in the fact that he was able to earn his living by fighting the insurgents in the forest.

We had nowhere to go. And we started a war with them. Why? On the battlefield it is the Chechen whom we face. In Russian uniform. That is, a Rus-

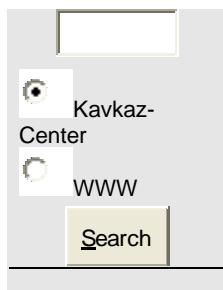
- kavkaz.tv
- kavkaz.org.uk
- kavkazcenter.com
- kavkazcenter.net
- kavkazcenter.info

- wap.kavkaz.tv
- pda.kavkaz.tv



so in
is
action

- Saad Minkail... war is defined... clear who op
- Message from Usman to the apostates, and to Kadyrov's
- Emir Dokka A... "this year will offensive year
- "All that is ha... is a mirage" (a Chechen M
- Prague Watch... interview with Mujahid
- Emir Sayfulla... interview to t Foundation
- The 'mop-up' (interview with Ocherhadji)
- Emir Supyan... declaring the Emirate, more words were s
- Amir Dokka A... Sheikh Sayee... address Mus... village
- Mullah Mohar... Bakman; Tal



Our button



sian, only with Chechen nationality - but he's our enemy. In Russian uniform, with a Russian weapon in his hands, he went against his people and his religion. Therefore both our religion and our customs tell us that it's our duty to fight him. That's the only way they can be stopped. I repeat, we always warn them and urge them to give up their jobs.

A year ago I personally asked this man to resign from the police. And he sent a reply: "Try to make me!" That is why Allah used our hands to take his life away. From afar it is difficult to understand. To us here on the spot it is all obvious. These people persecute us day and night, without a break. That is why we conduct our operations against them. We have no choice. They fight us just like the Russians do, with the Russians' weapons and vehicles. We have to respond. Anyone who fights in a war will understand this only too well.

I would like to say that we haven't violated anything that is connected with the traditions of the Chechen people, the requirements of Islam. We stand firm on this. They are the ones who are the violators.

PW: But after all, you didn't kill him on the battlefield, but dragged him from his home and shot him. Is that consistent with Islamic law?

A.-M.: Today whoever takes up arms to defend the Russian government and shoots at us - they can be killed. That is our starting point. He shot a lot of our people, I know that for a fact. But even in these conditions we say, as we did before, that we will not touch a single one of those who are willing to give up their job and stay at home. But there are those who continue to fight with us, and even more furiously than the Russians themselves. They are the ones who won't allow the war to end. If it weren't for, the war would have stopped.

PW: The homes of insurgents are burned down, their relatives are harassed and persecuted. What effect does that have on your people?

A.-M.: For two years now they've been persecuting our relatives, day and night. We never touch their relatives, only them. We seek justice and retribution. All that we do is in harmony with our religion. But they burn homes, they punish our sisters, our mothers, our brothers. That way they seek to influence us, to weaken our hearts. But we know what we are moving towards. They try to harm us in every way they can. They want to destroy our spirit. But by the will of Allah we will stand on the path of Islam. We will strengthen Islam and broaden it. We believe in it.

PW: Many of Chechnya's civilians are pleased at what the authorities are doing: the authorities are building homes, they constructed the largest mosque in Europe, they're improving people's lives. Don't you see any changes for the better?

A.-M.: Kadyrov brings Tyson to Chechnya, and he'll be bringing Michael Jackson. Then it will be some artistes, some Arabs. Why? He's conducting a policy of the stick and carrot.. Beat the man, beat him and beat him, then throw him a piece of bread. He thinks that's the way to deal with people, but it's all just temporary. I swear, even the Muslim prayers they're allowed to

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hold today will be banned tomorrow. For no one in Chechnya today can follow the ways of the Prophet. Young people complain to us that they're being told at home not to go to the mosques. They're even being taken out of the mosques. And all the rest is just for show, there's nothing to it... If they were truly supportive of Islam, do you think we'd be against it? No, of course we wouldn't.

And all this show is being paid for by our oil. The republic doesn't even get 10 percent of the oil revenues. So why do we take their bait? They're grabbing all the oil and throwing us handouts. Telling us meanwhile that "Russia feeds us". No, it doesn't. Today, if it wasn't for the mujahideen they'd be able to send us into exile as they did in 1944. We have to remember that. They're the people who tormented our fathers, and now they're tormenting us. So everything that Kadyrov does is hypocrisy. It's just that they have control of information, of television. And they can deceive people. And our people are very willing to believe what they're told on TV. There is almost no one left in Chechnya who is able to openly speak the truth. Everything is under the thumb of the authorities. Even religion is interpreted in the way they want.

If we had an independent state, our oil would pay for a fine standard of living. That's why we've taken the path of struggle - so we can have our state, so that the Muslims can live in peace. All that is happening today is a mirage. And it will pass.. Allah is testing the Muslims.

***PW:** But many Chechens support the authorities. You say that you're fighting for the people's happiness. The people praise Kadyrov. Perhaps you haven't noticed that you've moved away from the people and lost contact with it?*

A.-M.: I can quote a hadith. Ali's son was going to Iraq. He asked those whom he met: "What is happening there?" They replied: "The hearts of all the people of Iraq are with you, but their swords are turned against you." What does that mean? The hearts of the people of Chechnya are with us. They have all told us that. They love us, but they love us in their hearts. If they talk about it openly, they'll be persecuted. They are all living under a very heavy yoke of oppression. You just have to lift your head and you're crushed. So they're afraid. They have no weapons - they're civilians. What can they do? They have to stay silent. I don't blame them, because I understand. I live here and see it all. The people are oppressed, as in the days of Stalin. Nothing can be said openly. But in reality, people respect us and support us. If that were not the case, we wouldn't have so many people coming to join us. And they come in their multitudes. They see the injustice of the authorities and they come to us. But if any one of them says a word in support of us, tomorrow he will find himself in a basement in Khosi-Yurt, and he'll be tortured.

***PW:** Who is doing the fighting today? What sort of people are they, how many of them are there - what is their age, their social status, their level of education? What does an insurgent look like?*

A.-M.: I can talk about myself. Two years ago I arrived here from Austria. I had a good life there, didn't want for anything. But I gave it all up and came

back when I realized a lot of things. Although people may not believe it, there are a great many insurgents. They sincerely believe in Allah. And all the talk about how they have taken this path in search of money is a lie. Does one earn money by dying? What do I need money for if I can die today? Money won't help me when I stand before Allah. It will only help my deeds.

If I had wanted to earn money, I'd have looked for it elsewhere. After all, the world is a big place, you can live anywhere. But that's not the life we are looking for. We seek Allah's blessing in the next world. We want to strengthen Islam. What we have done today will help us tomorrow. Why? If we are victorious today, the Muslims will be free. They will be able to freely practice their faith. Each person will have all the rights that are given to him by Allah. And we will die on that path. Allah will give us paradise. We believe that. Inshallah! Those who have social and financial problems will not come to us. They will yield to the munafiqs. And there they will find a way to resolve their issues. But we seek advantage from Allah. And Allah willing, we will find it. Allah gives everyone what they seek.

Allah said that no one on his path will be left without benefit - either he will be victorious or he will receive paradise after he dies. We have this choice. If we are victorious, we will be open for the Muslims. We will not be criminal for them. If a criminal appears among us, we have the power to stop him. And we will not let the others do evil. We shall be for justice. Many things have been cleared up in comparison with the first war. And they go on being cleared up. After all, at each moment we stand before death.

Of our ranks I will say this: among us there are young and old, there are doctors, construction workers, graduates of institutes and universities. We have a program of Islamic studies and international current affairs. We know what we want. I am 30 years old. A time for life. But this, the best time of my life, I have devoted to Islam and the strengthening of the Word of Allah. And Allah will not forsake me! This I believe!

Source: Prague Watchdog

Kavkaz Center

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Analyzed text:

1) **Narrative summary:** Killing of Russian collaborators who attack the militants- They are taken from their houses and shot. Citing culture and Islamic law to justify. Explaining that it is because of them that the war continues. They fight them even more than they fight the Russians do. They will not harm those who turn their backs on the Russians.

2) **Key text and phrases examined:**

“PW: Many of Chechnya's civilians are pleased at what the authorities are doing: the authorities are building homes, they constructed the largest mosque in Europe, they're improving people's lives. Don't you see any changes for the better?”

A.-M.: Kadyrov brings Tyson to Chechnya, and he'll be bringing Michael Jackson. Then it will be some artistes, some Arabs. Why? He's conducting a policy of the stick and carrot.. **Beat the man, beat him and beat him, then throw him a piece of bread.** He thinks that's the way to deal with people, but it's all just temporary. I swear, even the Muslim prayers they're allowed to hold today will be banned tomorrow. For no one in Chechnya today can follow the ways of the Prophet. Young people complain to us that they're being told at home not to go to the mosques. They're even being taken out of the mosques. And all the rest is just for show, there's nothing to it... If they were truly supportive of Islam, do you think we'd be against it? No, of course we wouldn't.

And all this show is being paid for by our oil. The republic doesn't even get 10 percent of the oil revenues. So why do we take their bait? They're grabbing all the oil and throwing us handouts. Telling us meanwhile that "Russia feeds us". No, it doesn't. Today, if it wasn't for the mujahideen they'd be able to send us into exile as they did in 1944. We have to remember that. **They're the people who tormented our fathers**, and now they're tormenting us. So everything that Kadyrov does is **hypocrisy**. *It's just that they have control of information, of television. And they can deceive people. And our people are very willing to believe what they're told on TV. There is almost no one left in Chechnya who is able to openly speak the truth. Everything is under the thumb of the authorities. Even religion is interpreted in the way they want.*

If we had an independent state, our oil would pay for a fine standard of living. That's why we've taken the path of struggle - so we can have our state, so that the Muslims can live in peace. All that is happening today is a mirage. And it will pass.. Allah is testing the Muslims."

3) **First key message:** Collaborators are worse! The comfort that the state throws are but scraps to keep the masses quiet. The initial religious grievance of not being allowed to go to mosques then goes into more material issues of how the Russians are siphoning off Chechnya oil. Recurring theme of Media control in the hands of the state so people believe what they are being told hence not resisting the govt in masses. Hypocrisy and misguidance and illusion fed by the state. Material issues are a key grievance. Religion in the background. But it gives the theological support to their actions.

4) **Second key message:** Claims people give illusion of support to the state as they are dependant on it and fear persecution.

5) **Third key message:** Kills assumption of econ. deprivation. Says these (econ deprived) would not turn to them but to the state for help. Cites in contrast they only depend on God. Moral highground argument. They do it not for the money but to please God.

Those who come are usually well endowed and financially independent/ able. He also cites how they are well educated as well. He is alluding to their altruism in leaving a life of normalcy and comfort to come fight in the Jihad.

6) **Other Imp Points to note:** *Source: Prague Watchdog* (interviewer) is apparently an independent source. Clearly defined purpose for the struggle and what can be done with the oil. Rational construction of argument to bring in empirical and corroborative evidence *“The republic doesn't even get 10 percent of the oil revenues.”* . Also use of analogies to counter argument that the people are benefiting from the state so why fight them? *“Kadyrov brings Tyson to Chechnya, and he'll be bringing Michael Jackson. Then it will be some artistes, some Arabs. Why? He's conducting a policy of the stick and carrot.. Beat the man, beat him and beat him, then throw him a piece of bread. He thinks that's the way to deal with people, but it's all just temporary.”*

7) **Thematic and argumentation categories seen in narrative:**

- a. **Key Theme:** “Seeing past the ruse – creating consciousness.” – What the Russians are actually up to.
- b. “Biasness of Mainstream Media.” – Russian control of the media resulting in the Chechnyan militants looking bad. Citing of empirical fact that Russians and pro Russian Chechnyan state do control the media.
- c. “They want to Change Islam to be subservient and passive.” – How Russians will slowly want to control the way Islam is practiced and is entrenched as they see it as a threat. *“Even religion is interpreted in the way they want.”* Corroboration by experiential occurrence at the grassroots. *“Young people complain to us that they're being told at home not to go to the mosques. They're even being taken out of the mosques.”*
- d. “Lackey Muslims and Hypocritical leaders.” – Russian Collaborators.
- e. “Noble Character of the Jihadist.” – Willing to forsake a life of comfort and material wealth seeking for a greater cause.
- f. “Reductionism.” (Rational argument)- Use of analogies.
- g. “Clarity of purpose.” (Rational Argument)- Propose a clear solution of why they fight and what they will do with oil revenues.

Annex I: “Millat Ibraheem” by Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi

- 1) Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi : *“Born in Nablus; one of the most influential jihadi ideologues. He is currently in jail in Jordan. While in prison in the 1990s, he mentored Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi, for which he came to the attention of the West. He studied the works of earlier Salafi writers and thinkers and traveled through Saudi Arabia, where he developed a view of Salafi ideology akin to the Saudi Salafis, yet with endorsements for jihad and armed resistance to tyrannical rule.”* See, "Militant Ideology Atlas | Combating Terrorism Center at West Point." Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/militant-ideology-atlas> (accessed November 28, 2011).

- 2) *“To start off on this subject, Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (fakkAllahu Asra) wrote in his magnificent book, “Millat Ibraheem” that the enemies of Allah can be broken down into two categories:*

- 1. The non-Muslim*
- 2. The non-Muslim that fights Islam*

We will tackle the first category and in our next post we will discuss the second, inshAllahu. Both of these, undoubtedly, are the enemies of Allah. Some may ask the question, “Why are the non-Muslims the enemy of Allah when they are innocent and haven’t killed anyone or haven’t done any injustice?” To answer this, we turn to the words of Allah, the Most High,

تُشْرِكُ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا

Behold, Luqman said to his son by way of instruction: “O my son! Join not in worship (others) with Allah: for false worship is indeed the greatest injustice.”

(Luqman: 13)

The crime of a non-Muslim is that they have done Shirk; even if they are Jews, Christians, Hindus, and so on. The crime of Shirk is much greater than the crime of murder since Shirk is a sin that can never be forgiven as Allah said,

عَظِيمًا ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُعْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيُعْفِرُ مَا دُونِ

Verily, Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases; and whoever associates anything with Allah, he devises indeed a great sin. (an-Nisa: 48)...

***Every single non-Muslim is like an awful stench** and every single practicing believer is like a beautiful perfumed smell. When one stays inside a blacksmith shop for a few hours, they eventually smell terrible; and this is the parable of the Kafir. They can easily influence you into evil by their smiles, laughs, jokes, and talks with you and eventually what happens is that you don't feel like showing your animosity and hatred towards them for their Shirk; and **this is a great sin for not hating what Allah hates**. This is why many Scholars don't allow working under a Kafir since it would be extremely difficult to continue that job if one is a*

Mu'min. This is another reason that makes Hijrah fard al 'ayn on all Muslims; because you can't practice your Deen properly!...

*To reiterate, every single non-Muslim is an enemy of Allah and a Kafir. And anyone who denies this by saying that they are not Kafir, even though their creed is clear that they are Kafir, then he is Kafir himself since he doesn't believe the statements of Allah's Anger of Shirk. We will discuss this issue further much later down the line, inshAllah. And **whosoever is tolerant of what Allah hates, then how can that person even be called a Muslim?!**"* author cited this post which appeared in the "The Ignored Puzzle Pieces of Knowledge" extremist Muslim website forum; see : "Irritating Du'aas. - Page 2 - English Sabla, post entry dated 02-10-07, 04:46 PM.", *English Sabla*, <http://www.englishsabla.com/forum/showthread.php?p=948673> (accessed November 1, 2011).

Annex J: Dr Saeed Ismaeel, "Muslim and Non-Muslim Relation."

Dr Saeed Ismaeel, "Muslim and Non-Muslim Relation." Religious Rehabilitation Group . www.rrg.sg/edisi/data/Muslim_non-Muslim_Relations.pdf (accessed August 26, 2011).

"The context of this verse begins from verse (5: 12) in which Allah, glorified be He, tells the story of some Jews and Christians who rejected and mocked their prophet and plotted against Islam. So, the reference is not to all Jews or all Christians, but only to those who participated in or approved these evil deeds. The context, sometimes, is not included in the text but exists in the reason or the specific event behind the revelation of the verse or the judgment. And without referring to the event itself the verse cannot be interpreted properly, such as in the case of the verse which reads: {Soon We shall cast terror into the hearts of the unbelievers, because they worshipped other things with Allah, for which He had sent no authority. Their abode will be Fire, and evil will be the home of the wrong doers.}(Glorious Quraan, 3: 151.) Although the reason for the mentioned threat seems to be sufficiently declared in the verse, the complete meaning is not clear till we read from verse (3: 139), where the description and the comment on the battle of Uhud begins. In other words, the threat was given not just because they worshipped other things with Allah, but because of their aggressive acts against the Muslims. Similarly, when we look at the following verses without their contexts, they seem to be passing generalized judgment.

These verses read: {Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with you unless you follow their religion...}(Glorious Quraan, 2: 120 and its context begins from verse 2: 40.) and {Even if you bring to the People of the Book all signs, they would not follow

your Qiblah or religion...}(Glorious Quraan, 2: 145 and it is a continuation of verse 2: 120.) If we try to understand those two verses without their contexts, we will certainly end up with accusing the Glorious Quraan of contradiction. The generalized meaning of these verses contradicts numerous verses, Prophetic Traditions, legal opinions of the majority of Muslim jurists and valid historical reports. All of which assure the existence of the neutral non-Muslims, the supportive, or those who accepted Islam among the People of the Book.”