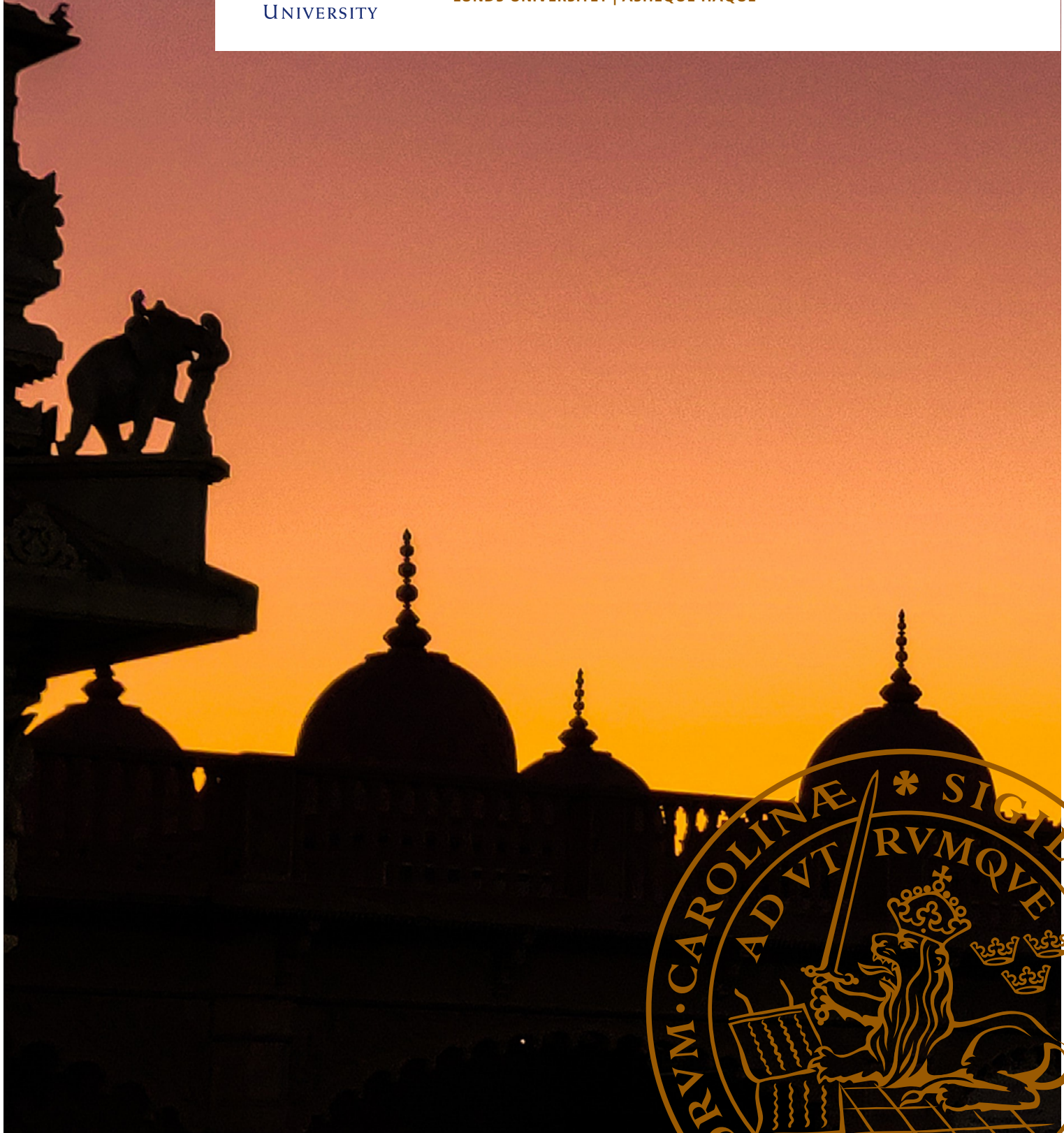




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Violent Jihadist Ideology in South Asia: Socio-Political Implications

LUNDS UNIVERSITET | ASHEQUE HAQUE



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The South Asia Initiative (SAI) is a platform for research, analysis and outreach on the countries of South Asia, and the relationship between the region and the wider world. The initiative is co-hosted by the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI) and the Swedish South Asian Studies Network (SASNET), at Lund University.



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Introduction

Al Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State¹ claim to put Islam at the center of their thoughts and actions. For these two terrorist organizations, their version of the violent jihadist ideology is the guiding principle. While there have been many debates among both Islamic Studies scholars and Muslims in general about how Islamic either of these organizations and their activities are, the organizations claim that all of their conduct is based on principles that emanate from Islamic theology. As such, they claim that Islamic theological discourse is the foundation of their violent jihadist ideology.

Both of these violent jihadist organizations have posed significant security challenges for many countries in the world over the past few years. For most of the eight countries in modern South Asia – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka – this has been the case as well. Some of these countries, such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, have faced severe consequences due to the presence and activities of these terrorist organizations. For others, such as Nepal and Bhutan, the threats have been relatively low. Nonetheless, all the countries in South Asia have faced some consequences from these threats that have impacted their societies and politics.

Several academic studies and policy reports have been written regarding jihad, terrorism, and radicalization in South Asia and have led to many counter-terrorism (CT), countering violent extremism (CVE), and preventing violent extremism (PVE) methods and efforts. Among them are the seminal works of the South Asia scholars such as Rohan Gunaratna, Ayesha Jalal, C. Christian Fair, Antonio Giustozzi, Ali Riaz, and Dilip Hiro. Many studies conducted on this issue have focused on terrorist attacks, terrorist profiles, and the causes behind terrorism, aptly responding to the severity of the security threat facing the countries and their populace, as well as the search for the authorities to close down the pathways of terrorism.

However, violent jihadist ideological discourse with its theological underpinnings is not only about violence and death; other aspects impact various spheres of

our societies. While these less discussed aspects do not necessarily pose an imminent and violent danger to us, they nonetheless complete the violent jihadist ideological understanding and are an integral part of it. These other aspects are less militaristic and are more political and social, challenging the core characteristics of modern society such as democracy, judicial due process, human rights, peace, and tolerance. The purpose of this study is to elaborate on these aspects of violent jihadist ideology in South Asia to better understand the political and social implications for the countries in the region.

The central argument of this study is that these aspects of violent jihadist ideology, in the form of opinions, visions, pathways, and policies with regards to socio-political issues, support and amplify the orthodox and regressionist narratives within these societies. They influence and attempt to alter our societies into something that conforms to the violent jihadist ideology and assists violent jihadism. This essentially strengthens the forces that are against the moderate and progressive narratives in society and significantly hinders progressive change. This study performs the important task of presenting and analyzing this consequence of the violent jihadist ideology within the South Asian context. The findings add greater depth to understandings of the socio-political challenges emanating from violent jihadism. They further act as a guide for policymakers to implement informed policy decisions in the region. To better comprehend the context of this study, a historical understanding of jihadism in the region is first discussed in the following section.

History of violent jihadist ideology in South Asia

To understand the dynamics of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State in South Asia, it is important to understand the experience of violent jihadism in the region. Violent jihadist thought and action have been present in South Asia for a long time and there have been many local and regional groups. Many of these groups recruited sympathizers by exploiting the existing socio-political challenges in this region. These groups have had a long history of interacting with other violent jihadists in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, as well.

A historical understanding of the Indian subcontinent is also important to contextualize violent jihadism in modern South Asia. It has been fewer than 80 years since the countries of modern South Asia were created with their existing geographical borders. Before the partition in 1947, British India was a large country with contemporary India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh as part of it. Sri Lanka was a British colony as well. This allowed free movement of people and ideas in this large region, resulting in a shared historical experience and early jihadist ideology among its people. Historic violent jihadist incidents, as well as the contributions of important violent jihadist ideologues from that period, continue to influence to this day.

The terminology and the concept of violent jihadism have been around in the subcontinent for a long time. Rahman describes that medieval rulers such as Ghiyasuddin Balban, Timur, Mughal Emperor Babur, and Aurangzeb, all used jihad and such “religious vocabulary for legitimation, seeking endorsement from the Ulama, sanctifying past history and other such purposes.” He argues that “the use of jihadi language remained as a handy resource for the political ascendancy in India”.² Rahman notes several major resistance movements during the colonial times in the subcontinent, among them the Faraidi movement of Bengal³, Wahabi networks running underground anti-British movements and the Wahabi trials of 1860, and the Silk Letters conspiracy involving Darul Ulum Deoband.⁴ He mentions several ideologues, Shah Waliullah and Shah Abdul Aziz, and states that “Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi is known as the pioneer of jihad in modern India.”⁵ According to Rahman, “the most influential jihadi thinker of the subcontinent in the colonial period was Abul Ala Mawdudi” who, “as

the discourse about jihad changed significantly because of Mawdudi’s input... he is often credited with being one of the intellectual fathers of Islamist militancy which is much in evidence nowadays in the form of violent attacks”⁶ Mawdudi’s influence over violent jihadist ideology remains to this day and his ideas were later embedded into the ideology of global violent jihadism.⁷

In post-colonial South Asia, violent jihadism reignited with the Soviet-Afghan war of 1979–89, which changed the course of South Asian jihadist history as it led to the spread of violent jihadist members, ideology, and training throughout the subcontinent. At the end of the war, mujahideen from Afghanistan broke into civil war, leading to the emergence of the Afghan Taliban and their takeover of the country in 1996. Osama bin Laden returned to Afghanistan in this year after having previously fought in the Soviet-Afghan war.⁸ He planned and operationalized the 9/11 attacks from Afghanistan, resulting in the US-led Coalition Forces invasion in 2001. However, after almost two decades of war, and at a cost of nearly 2 trillion US dollars, violent jihadism has not been displaced from Afghanistan and the Taliban are slowly gaining back territory in the country.⁹ Furthermore, the Islamic State formally announced the Islamic State Khurasan (ISK) in Afghanistan in 2015. This led to a complex and mainly conflictual relationship with the Taliban. Though ISK faced many losses since its establishment, it still holds on to several provinces in Afghanistan and has carried out several major attacks in the country.¹⁰

Mujahidin who joined the Soviet-Afghan war from Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh returned to their countries at the end of the war and launched various local and regional violent jihadist organizations. These organizations

were loosely connected to Al Qaeda for networks and funding and remained in the same violent jihadist ideological sphere. Jalal wrote that “The Wahabi-Deobandi alliance was cemented in 1989 after Osama bin Laden’s meeting with the Taliban leader Mullah Omar in Karachi”.¹¹ Over the years, these violent jihadists have carried out many attacks and brought nations to the brink of war. And since the US-led Coalition Forces started the latest war in Afghanistan, South Asia has witnessed an increased number of attacks that have received global attention and condemnation. With the arrival of digital technology, violent jihadists in the region took the battle to online spaces. Ideologues such as Mufti Jashimuddin Rahmani of Bangladesh have vigorously used online platforms to disseminate violent jihadist propaganda; Rahmani’s online sermons consist of one of the largest compendia of violent jihadist materials in the Bangla language.¹² Shami Witness, the nom-de-guerre of a major propagator of IS information materials, was later found out to be a marketing executive living in Bangalore, India. He had 18,000 followers and ran a globally influential campaign for IS.¹³

Mahadevan claims that in early 1990, the Inter-Services Intelligence of the Pakistani Military decided to foster operational linkages between the Afghan and Kashmiri jihad.¹⁴ This led to further empowering of violent jihadist groups in the subcontinent.¹⁵ Various violent jihadist groups, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, and the Haqqani Network, operated from Pakistan. Mahadevan suggests that Lashkar-e-Taiba became the main partner of Al Qaeda in South Asia.¹⁶ In 2014, Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) was formed by Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.¹⁷

As for the violent jihadist ideologues in South Asia, in addition to Abul Ala Mawdudi, Rahman mentions a few other Pakistani ideologues, among them Hafiz Muhammad Said, the ideologue of Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Mawlana Masud Azhar of Jaish-e-Muhammad. Rahman notes that Mawlana Masud Azhar writes about all South Asian Muslims and as such his writings have a regional impact.¹⁸ Rahman particularly notes the use of interpolation by Masud Azhar in his writings, which led his readers to his preferred meaning of religious texts which offer a militant meaning of jihad.¹⁹

For the two island nations of Sri Lanka and the Maldives, violent jihadism is a relatively new phenomenon compared to the other South Asian countries.^{20,21} As of late, the Maldives has had a surprisingly large involvement with violent jihadist fighters traveling abroad. It is estimated that about 250 Maldivians traveled to Iraq and Syria to join Jabhat al-Nusrah, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, and the Islamic State.²² As for Sri Lanka, the largest violent jihadist attack was on Easter Day in 2019 killing over 300 people. The attack was claimed by IS and was conducted by a local violent jihadist group named National Thowheeth Jamaath. In 2016, Sri Lanka acknowledged that 32 people had joined IS,²³ and it is asserted that returned Sri Lankan fighters from the IS in the Middle East were involved in the Easter Day attack.²⁴

There are no known violent jihadist groups conducting operations in Nepal and Bhutan, which is why these two countries are not discussed in this study.

Violent jihadist ideological content in South Asia

The discussion in the previous section delineates the long history of violent jihadist activities in South Asian countries. With the spread of information and communications technology and the internet in recent years, many of the informational activities take place online. Violent jihadist organizations heavily utilize various social media platforms to disseminate their messages to the masses. The internet has allowed members of these organizations to collaborate across geographical borders and tap into faraway resources. As a result, violent jihadists have been using many methods and channels to disseminate materials in many local languages to a large number of audiences in multiple formats.

Both Al Qaeda and IS have used magazines to publish and disseminate their violent ideology and propaganda.²⁵ While several magazines have been published by these organizations over the years, the more known one is Inspire Magazine by Al Qaeda. IS started publishing Dabiq Magazine and later changed the name to Rumiya.²⁶ Local violent jihadist groups and organizations that are affiliated with AQ or IS also publish magazines for the local audience or language group. For example, AQIS published Resurgence Magazine and IS published Sawt al-Hind Magazine, specifically targeting the Indian population.²⁷ These magazines are often published in

English and in most cases they are translated into many other languages. The local magazines also regularly translate articles from English-language magazines to local languages.²⁸ In addition, the groups have magazines for a targeted locality in their language. For example, Nawai Afghan Jihad, the voice of Afghan jihad, is an Urdu-language monthly magazine for the supporters of the Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda mainly in Pakistan.²⁹ It has published monthly issues since 2010 and continues to do so.³⁰ Table 1 lists several magazines by Al Qaeda and IS noted during this study.

Table 1: Magazines published by Al Qaeda and IS.

GROUP	NAME	LANGUAGE	TARGET AUDIENCE	OPERATIONAL YEARS
Al Qaeda	Inspire	English	25	2010–2017
Al Qaeda	Resurgence	English	5	2014–2015
Al Qaeda	Nawai Afghan Jihad	Urdu	-	2010–
Al Qaeda	Al Balagh	Bengali	-	2016–
Al Qaeda	Dawah Ilallah	Bengali	8	2020
Islamic State	Dabiq	English	1	2014–2016
Islamic State	Rumiya	English	2	2016–2017
Islamic State	Sawt al-Hind	English		2020
Islamic State	Al Risalah	English		2020

For this study, 11 articles from five magazines, published either by Al Qaeda or IS, were analyzed. The use of magazines for analysis ensures that the messages therein are from these violent jihadist organizations. The validity and reliability of this research increase with the use of these magazines as the source for empirical data. These magazines have been responsibly collected from reliable academic sources. Since violent jihadist propaganda must not be retransmitted into the society even through research projects, the exact source locations of these magazines have not been disclosed. Table 2 shows the details of the articles analyzed for this study.

These eleven articles represent various aspects of the violent jihadist messages targeted toward the population in South Asia in order to make them take prescribed actions. Ingram proposes that Inspire and Dabiq provide their readership with a “competitive system of meaning” (i.e., an alternative perspective of the world compared to the one presented by their opponents), that acts as a “lens” through which they “shape their supporters’ perceptions, polarize their support, and, ultimately, convince them to mobilize.”³¹ In the following section, these perspectives of the world are discussed.

Table 2: Articles included in the analysis.

ARTICLE NO.	GROUP NAME	MAGAZINE NAME AND ISSUE	ARTICLE TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR PUBLISHED
1.	Al Qaeda	Inspire, 8	Lust and Fear: An Insight into the Pakistani Army and its role in the Crusades	Abu Obaidah al-Islamabadi	2011
2.	Al Qaeda	Resurgence, 1	The Future of Muslims in India	Aasim Umar	2014
3.	Al Qaeda	Resurgence, 1	Bangladesh at the Crossroads	Sulaiman Ahmed	2014
4.	Al Qaeda	Resurgence, 1	Islamization of a Declining System	Dr. Javed Ansari	2014
5.	Islamic State	Dabiq, 6	Al-Qaidah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within	Abu Jarir ash-Shamali	2015
6.	Islamic State	Dabiq, 13	Interview with the Wali of Khurasan	Unnamed author	2016
7.	Islamic State	Dabiq, 14	Interview with the Amir of the Khilafah’s Soldiers in Bengal Shaykh Abu Ibrahim al-Hanif	Unnamed author	2016
8.	Islamic State	Rumiyah, 3	Sultan Mahmud al-Ghaznawi: Breaker of Idols, Subduer of Heresies	Unnamed author	2016
9.	Islamic State	Sawt al-Hind, 1	So where are you going? A call to Muslims of Hind	Abu Zakariya al-Hindi	2020
10.	Islamic State	Sawt al-Hind, 1	Disease of Nationalism	Unnamed author	2020
11.	Islamic State	Sawt al-Hind, 1	Ten Matters in Aqeedah that a Muslim Cannot be Ignorant and Must Learn: Part 1-First three matters	Unnamed author	2020

Analysis of the socio-political aspects in the magazines

Among the messages propagated through these violent jihadist magazines, discussions, anecdotes, and narratives about violence and jihad constitute the main portion. However, beyond the usual call for violence and conflict, the articles selected for this study also discuss or allude to other issues of importance to the violent jihadist groups. They contain a vision for society and the methods to structure, govern, and exclude members of the society. These socio-political aspects are the focus of this analysis.

Violent jihadist leaders and ideologues develop their socio-political policies based on the violent jihadist ideology that they believe in and profess that the ideology justify these policies. Hence it is important to briefly discuss the elements of violent jihadist ideology. In his book *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, Shiraz Maher argues that the Salafi-Jihadi movement consists of “five essential and irreducible features” that are repeatedly presented, discussed, and promoted in Salafi-Jihadi ideology: jihad, tawhid, takfir, al-wala wal-bara, and hakimiyya.³² According to Maher, jihad is the concept of violence or armed struggle and takes predominance in the ideology in terms of the volume of discourse that covers the potential for violence.³³ Tawhid is considered as the central pillar in Islam as it is the doctrine of monotheism and the omnipotence of God.³⁴ Takfir is the process of declaring other Muslim individuals or groups to be outside of Islam or no longer remain Muslim.³⁵ Maher describes al-wala wal-bara as a vague and slippery idea, which alludes to loyalty and disavowal. He argues that this concept forms a distinct delineation between the jihadi version of Islam and everything else; guarding the faith against impurity and inauthenticity.³⁶ It includes everything that Muslims love and hate due to God’s commands. Finally, in jihadi ideology, hakimiyya means securing political sovereignty for God. Maher describes it as the aspect of establishing political authority for Islam.³⁷

The five elements are interconnected. Maher describes them as “The doctrine of al-wala wal-bara establishes lines of loyalty and disavowal; takfir delineates Islam against everything else and protects it against insidious corruption from within; tawhid and hakimiyya explain what legitimate authority should look like and who it should serve; and jihad prescribes the method for this particular revolution.”³⁸ Out of these five elements, this

study emphasizes more on al-wala wal-bara, tawhid, and hakimiyya, and less on jihad and takfir. The reason is that these three aspects create the underlying reasonings upon which the actions of jihad and takfir are taken. These latter three aspects set the goals whereas the former two act as means. This also implies that the violent jihadist ideology cannot be partially used or implemented; the entirety of it must be taken into account to understand their complete religious system.

Among the various socio-political aspects that the violent jihadist magazine articles touch upon, the following stand out based on the selected articles for this study. For each of them, the theological justification based on violent jihadist ideology is also discussed using the framework proposed by Maher.

DEMOCRACY:

One of the biggest threats emanating from the violent jihadist ideology is to democratic processes and institutions. Democracy as a concept has been time and again deplored by these violent jihadist groups. Five of the eleven articles investigated in this study contained criticism or hatred toward democracy. In article 2, titled “The Future of Muslims in India”, Asim Umar called the Indian democracy “empty slogans” and said it offered “deceit and trickery”. In article 3, Sulaiman Ahmed claimed that Muslims in Bangladesh were shackled in a democratic process and commented that ballots fail but bullets offer deliverance. In article 4 titled “Islamization of a Declining System”, Dr. Javed Ansari stated that there is no concept of “Islamic democracy” and that, “rather, the fruit of these movements is the subordinate subsumption (assimilation) of Islamic individuality and society within the capitalist system”. In article 7, Shaykh Abu Ibrahim al-Hanif harshly criticized the existing political parties in

Bangladesh, even though they were Islamic, along with democratic practices. In article 9, Abu Zakariya al-Hindi stated that the “evil seeds” of democracy in India only harvest “bitter fruits”, and that “Democracy is not going to save you. Only Sharee’ah implemented in its purity in the shade of Khilafah can now save you”. This repeated criticism and disapproval of democracy comes from the ideological standpoint that the rules of God should be supreme, rather than the rules created by man through democracy. This emanates from the violent jihadist theological concepts of tawhid and hakimiyya, which professes the absolute submission to the God-given system of governance.

JUDICIAL PROCESS:

Another common criticism by the violent jihadists both from Al Qaeda and the Islamic State is against existing judicial processes, laws, and constitutions, which features in eight of the eleven articles of eleven. In article 1 titled ‘Lust and Fear: An Insight into the Pakistani Army and its role in the Crusades’, Abu Obaidah al-Islamabadi emphasizes Islamic sharia laws and deplores the existing civilian laws of Pakistan as “un-Islamic”. In article 2, Aasim Umar called the Supreme Court of India an enemy of Islam. In article 3, Sulaiman Ahmed said that Muslims in Bangladesh should not have any concern for the judicial system because it is based on a secular constitution. He said, “why should one even abide by the law which derives its legitimacy from this constitution that does not even tolerate the name of our Lord? Where in Islam can you find the justification of shackling millions of Muslims in a ‘democratic process’ based on this sacrilege?” In article 4, Dr. Javed Ansari argued that there is no such thing as an Islamic legislature. In article 5, Abu Jarir ash-Shamali was not only critical of the traditional local laws of Waziristan, but also called for the implementation of the Sharia, and he highly praised one local group who had done just that. In article 6, the author praised efforts toward establishing the Sharia and implementing the hudud, replacing the previous judicial courts in Waziristan, and added that “We have established judicial courts in these regions, offices for hisbah, offices for zakah, and others for education, da’wah and masjid, and public services.”. In article 7, Shaykh Abu Ibrahim al-Hanif argued that it was an act of Kufr to not implement Sharia law in a country. In article 9, the author described the Constitution of India as “evil power of the sorcery of words” The amount of criticism found on this issue is due to the concept of tawhid in the violent jihadist

ideology. Tawhid alludes to the absolute sovereignty of God as the rule-giver. The violent jihadists reason that laws are given from God alone and thus any man-made law or legal system is un-Islamic. The emphasis on imposing Sharia law in a country comes from the concept of hakimiyya, which argues the importance of actively establishing the laws of God.

NATIONAL IDENTITY:

The concepts of nationalism and national identity are not accepted by violent jihadist organizations. Among the articles investigated in this study, these concepts were deplored in five of them. In article 1, Abu Obaidah al-Islamabadi argued that patriotism and nationalism are un-Islamic. These two concepts were also criticized in article 5. In article 3, the author concluded that a sense of national pride can take away the Islamic identity of a group of people. In article 7, Shaykh Abu Ibrahim al-Hanif called nationalism “a rotten call of jahiliyyah”, and in article 6, the Taliban were criticized for being nationalists. Maher called using nationalism to remove people from Islam a modern-day use of the violent jihadist concept of takfir.³⁹

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION:

From the magazine articles by Al Qaeda and IS selected for this study, criticism toward international cooperation and partnership is quite visible. One particular focus of anger is the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. These were criticized by the author of article 1 who said “The soldier of the Pakistani Army primarily fights for money and he justifies his moral corruption by taking pride in another un-Islamic concept of ‘patriotic nationalism’. ... For their conscience, it does not matter if they are asked to fight against Muslim mujahidin, or they have to safeguard the Crusaders interest under the banner of United Nations’ ‘peacekeepers’ at various places around the world.” In article 7 the author harshly commented that “this marriage of convenience between the taghut civilian government and the murtadd military generals who sell their religion for a miserable price is the primary reason why the Bengali government is the largest contributor to so-called UN ‘peacekeeping’ operations”. But even broader cooperation among countries was criticized as well. In article 3, Sulaiman Ahmed disapproved of the cooperation between Bangladesh, India, and the West. In article 5, the author was critical of respecting international laws, conventions, and borders.

The disapproval of any law other than the ones given by God is the basis of the violent jihadist ideological aspect of tawhid. Disapproval of cooperating with others who are not considered Muslims comes from the concept of al-wala wal-bara.

TOLERANCE AND INTER-FAITH HARMONY:

In seven articles out of eleven in this study, there are opinions and calls for action that have the potential to hinder inter-faith harmony and tolerance in society. Anger and hatred toward people from other religions have been observed in the articles, particularly toward the believers of the Hindu faith. This is observed in articles 2, 3, 6, 7, and 8. In article 3, Hindus were blamed for changing and converting the entire city of Dhaka with the author saying “Even culturally, this Muslim nation is being turned into an Indian outpost. The city of mosques, Dhaka, has been turned into a city of idols”. Hatred for other religions found in South Asia such as Christianity and Buddhism was also observed. The violent jihadists also expressed their anger and hatred toward other Muslims – articles 6 and 7 mention the Sufis, and articles 6, 7, and 8 mention the Rafidi, Qadiani, Ismaili, and others.

Beyond hatred for other religions, hatred toward other cultures is also observed. In article 3, Hindu culture is described in derogatory terms and considered as a disease. Elements of cultural heritage such as arts and monuments came under threat as well. In article 8 titled “Sultan Mahmud al-Ghaznawi: Breaker of Idols, Subduer of Heresies”, the destruction and humiliation of places of cultural heritage and religious values were celebrated by depicting the destruction of many Hindu temples. Communal division was also promoted by the violent jihadists in articles 7 and 11, where it was suggested to separate people based on their religion. In article 6, Shaykh Hafidh Sa’id Khan criticized the Chinese people, among others. The theological reasoning behind this anger and hatred can be found in the concept of al-wala wal-bara in jihadi ideology, which recommends love and hate for people or things for the sake of God.

SECULARISM:

Beyond religious identities, people of secular belief and non-faiths are a target of anger by the violent jihadists. Atheists, communists, and secularists were criticized in articles 3, 7, and 9. In article 3, the author suggested that allowing the model of secularism that Kemal Atatürk implemented in Turkey will erase Islamic identity. In article 7, the author celebrated the violent jihadists and

their murderous actions taken to terrify the secularists. In article 9, Abu Zakariya al-Hindi said, “Here you have seen the complete breakdown of the system of secularism which, to be frank, existed only in the hearts of naive and gullible Muslims and that too only as a figment of imagination”. According to Maher, Al Qaeda in Iraq, which later became ISIS, used the concept of takfir to declare all forms of secularism to be outside of Islam.⁴⁰

HUMAN RIGHTS:

Even from the small number of articles analyzed in this study, it is clear that many tenets that are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are targeted by the violent jihadists. To begin with, such an international convention would not be approved or accepted by them as they will see it as a substitute for God’s law, and hence they consider it un-Islamic. For example, in article 1, Abu Obaidah al-Islamabadi presents homosexuality in negative terms along with other “lifestyle choices” and said “as a result, immorality and corruption have seeped deep into the roots of the Pakistani Army and it is not uncommon to find alcoholics, gamblers, adulterers, homosexuals and drug traffickers amongst its lower and higher ranks”. But beyond the broader human rights issues, even the most fundamental rights such as the right to life is seen to be threatened by the violent jihadists in their magazine articles. In article 8, the author celebrated the killing of 50,000 people that were considered non-Muslims, or not Muslim enough, by Sultan Mahmud in the Indian subcontinent in the 11th century. He argued that such actions by the Sultan made him a better Muslim. These are justified by the violent jihadist ideological concepts of tawhid, al-wala wal-bara, takfir, and hakimiyya.

EDUCATION:

The violent jihadists of Al Qaeda and IS target the current education systems in South Asia in an attempt to change it into a version that suits them. Criticism or anger toward the education system was observed in four articles in this study. In article 4, Dr. Javed Ansari was critical of academic pursuits among the South Asian Muslims and argued, “No political system can establish its dominance simply by spiritual development or academic progress. Creating the space for the establishment of a new system requires an armed struggle”. In article 5, the author disapproved of the local children in Waziristan going to secular schools. He complained that the local mujahidin did not have control over education. In article 6, the

author praised the establishment of religious schools under the supervision of the violent jihadists in Afghanistan, stating that by establishing Islamic education the future generations would be raised upon the Quran and the Sunnah from an early age. The author also harshly criticized the country's existing scholars, who he labeled as "deviant scholars". In article 7, the author noted that lack of jihadi knowledge and education among the people of Bangladesh and criticized the local scholars and educators. He added that the local students study "under the sorcerers in the universities established and run by the Saudi tawaghit". The emphasis on rejecting modern or secular education and imposing Islamic education can be justified with the concept of al-wala wal-bara.

DEVELOPMENT:

From the magazine articles selected for this study, it was possible to observe the displeasure of the violent jihadists concerning the socioeconomic development of a country. Their opinion regarding modern education has already been discussed in the previous section. The violent jihadists disapprove of the activities of non-governmental organizations and the work of various foreign missionary organizations operating in the region. This was evident from article 7, titled 'Interview with the Amir of the Khilafah's Soldiers in Bengal Shaykh Abu Ibrahim al-Hanif', in which the author discussed the deceptive preaching of apostates in the region as well as the relentless efforts of the NGOs working in the country. In article 4, Dr. Javed Ansari did not even approve the practice of Islamic banking, which is often considered more religious than traditional banking concepts and practices. In this article, he said, "In the centuries from the time of the Noble Prophet (peace be upon him) till the rule of the Ottoman Caliph Abdul Hameed II, there was no concept of an 'Islamic bank' or an 'Islamic legislature' in the Muslim society". These policies can be justified with the violent jihadist concepts of tawhid, al-wala wal-bara, and hakimiyya.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP:

The violent jihadists from both Al Qaeda and IS have harshly criticized women's participation in politics and leadership. In article 3, Sulaiman Ahmed asked, "have we forgotten this saying of our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him), 'People will not prosper when their affairs are dictated by a woman?' Surely, we will not prosper

when an unscrupulous woman like Hasina Wajid takes it upon herself to dictate this nation's destiny!" In article 7, Shaykh Abu Ibrahim al-Hanif was highly critical of women's participation in politics and asked the local men in Bangladesh to free themselves from the enslavement of the "Kafir woman" ruling them. This disapproval of women's leadership and participation in politics comes from the concepts of tawhid, al-wala wal-bara, and hakimiyya.

CULTURE AND LANGUAGE:

From the articles, it was evident that the violent jihadists expressed their condemnation of existing cultural practices and the lifestyles of individuals. In article 1, the author criticized people in Pakistan for their indulgence in earthly pleasures. He criticized lifestyles and individual choices such as alcoholism, adultery, and lack of performing prayers regularly. In article 3, the author denounced alcoholism, termed obscenity as criminal, and deplored the actions of the Bangladeshi authorities which he claimed have legalized fornication. The author suggested that the hudud laws according to Islamic sharia should be implemented. In article 4, Dr. Javed Ansari was critical of a major, mainstream Islamic political party in India because they were creating a space for the protection of Islamic values, individuality, and society within the parameters of the capitalist framework.

The violent jihadists also show a tendency to alter local languages and incorporate more Arabic, thus promoting the Arabization of local languages. This can be observed particularly in the articles in IS magazines. For example, in article 8, titled "Sultan Mahmud al-Ghaznawi: Breaker of Idols, Subduer of Heresies", the unnamed author either Arabized the name of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni into Sultan Mahmud al-Ghaznawi or used a different version of his name, Sultan Mahmud Ibn Subuktikin, which is not commonly known in South Asia. The city of his birth was published as Ghaznah in Khurasan, and not Ghazni as it is called today. The author wrote, "Sultan Mahmud Ibn Subuktikin was born in Muharram of the year 360AH in the city of Ghaznah, Khurasan". The violent jihadists derive the justification for such opinions and visions from the concept of al-wala wal-bara.

Conclusion

This study has elaborated on the impact of the violent jihadist ideology in the modern South Asian context and shown that they are more wide-ranging than is commonly discussed. Particularly, the socio-political aspects that emanate from the ideology have a much wider implication for these countries, as they present visions and policies that attempt to alter the very fundamental structures and attributes of these societies.

This study has shown that violent jihadists categorically oppose many of the essential characteristics of a modern, progressive society. They pledge to replace democracy and existing judicial processes, restrict education and development, ban women's participation in politics, deny human rights and fundamental freedoms, and encourage discrimination based on religion, culture, and ethnicity. They bolster the fundamentalist forces present in society. As such, this study holds to its central argument that the socio-political aspects of the violent jihadist ideology support and amplify the orthodox and regressionist narratives within the societies.

Often, just by its appearance, an article in a violent jihadist magazine by Al Qaeda or Islamic State may seem to be only concerned with violence. But it is important to be aware of the broader implications that exist within the articles as explored in this study. Without this broader understanding, resulting policy decisions would be limited in scope and thus incomplete.

Furthermore, a better understanding of these socio-political aspects and using these arguments in counter-radicalization or preventing violent extremism (PVE) strategic communications could be useful and effective. This could aid the current methods of using religion-based counter-narratives or using a "crime & punishment" language. Explaining these socio-political implications might make such PVE messaging more relatable to the general population in a country.

Additionally, this study has shed light on the intersectional nature of this issue. It has shown how intricately connected PVE and security issues are to democracy and socioeconomic development issues. As such it highlights

the need by the practitioners on both sides to cooperate further, particularly in local contexts. It recommends fostering relations between the development sector and the security sector to comprehensively manage the challenges posed by violent jihadism.

This study has been conducted with limited resources and scope, and thus could only analyze a few selected cases. A broader study locating and utilizing various other violent jihadist ideological contents in multiple languages targeted toward the local populations in the region would be able to provide a much more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the subject matter.

This study has shown how the violent jihadist ideological propaganda materials, in their multiple forms and manifestations, remain as a roadblock and hindrance for South Asian societies to move forward toward development, peace, and tolerance. Through these ideologically backed visions for the society, violent jihadist groups want to wind back years of advancement made in human rights, peace, and progress. These visions are more than simply retaliating against the oppressors of the Muslims, they are about creating absolute divisions within the society based on the complete control of human lives and individual freedoms. The violent jihadist ideologues talk about liberation, but they actually want to establish subjugation.



Notes

- 1 Notes This naming convention is in accordance with the guidance from the Global Coalition against Daesh. <https://theglobalcoalition.org/en/>
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- 35 *ibid.* p.71.
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- 38 *ibid.* pp.15–16.
- 39 *ibid.* p.84.
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