COUNTERING THE RADICAL NARRATIVE

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Contents

For my wife

Afia

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Preface

Terrorism strikes us unawares and sends shockwaves of panic and confusion in society. The medium of violence itself becomes the message and causes cognitive and moral dissonance in impressionable minds. Therefore, the threat of terrorism lives on in the ideological realm long after its militant formations have been defeated on the battlefield.

However, it is ironic that most counter-terrorism measures of the day focus largely on military operations or on detection, surveillance, deterrence and disengagement measures. An equal amount of attention has still not been paid on defeating the enemy on the ideological front. In fact, most government and security agencies struggle to explain the appeal of radical propaganda and the ways to counter it through the effective use of counter-narratives. It is surprising that in the age of information and communications technology, counter-narratives remain a rather modest weapon in the counter-radicalisation armoury.

In fact, there seems to be a critical wariness in some quarters over the effectiveness of counter-narratives. Strategic experts may be adept at devising and implementing counter-radicalisation measures of detection and deterrence, but framing effective counter-narratives is the domain of the story teller and political/religious speech writers, whose output is difficult to empirically test or analyse. The inability to generate popular counter-narrative campaigns and develop a reliable metric for gaging their efficiency has inhibited the progress of the ideological counter-offensive against radicalisation.

Conversely, terrorist organisations continue to invest heavily in developing their ideological narratives and propaganda, which

constantly flood social media and the Dark Web as they draw in ever increasing number of recruits by the day.

It is this curious anomaly that this book seeks to redress by studying different styles of narrative propaganda and by parsing the disparate radical strands of terrorist ideology (mainly those found in Salafi-jihadist groups like Al-Qaeda, ISIS, etc.) in an attempt to then build a possible framework for developing effective counter-narratives or alternate narratives.

This book brings to light that every social and political issue generates several narratives at the same time. In fact, several narratives of a single news event, ideology or even a religion exist and compete with each other today in the electronic and social media and may appear equally persuasive in spite of their divergent positions. Narratives are becoming increasingly persuasive and adept at obfuscating their subjectivity. Images, ideas and facts are carefully framed and diction, idiom and metaphors are used to evoke a partisan viewpoint in an objective manner to an unsuspecting audience. Therefore, it is important to first understand how radical narratives are constructed and how material derived from a source ideology or religion get distorted and dovetailed into a carefully calibrated line of reasoning by radical groups to project their devious political agenda.

The deconstruction of the radical narrative is an essential step towards generating counter-narratives. Curiously, there is still a paucity of literature on the parsing of radical texts, even of prominent terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS. This book studies the use of counter-narratives, alternative narratives and meta-narratives, along with other methods and themes, for countering terrorist messaging. The threat posed by so-called jihadist organisations has become one of the biggest security threats to international peace and security in our times. It is for this reason that this book focuses on countering some of their most dubious tenets, even as it presents the humane values of Islam and juxtaposes them to the stark deviations made by jihadist groups against religious doctrines.

The book provides a primer for developing counter-narratives and invalidates some so-called theological interpretations of

contemporary jihadist organisations that have been concocted to justify their irreligious violence. Although the book devotes some space to theological counter-narratives against modern jihadist groups, it refrains from providing samples of political, social, historical and psychological counter-narratives given their large, diffuse and complex nature.

This book also provides a short overview of some of the major institutions engaged in counter-narrative programmes against radicalism. It also includes names of some of the reputed Islamic scholars who disseminate theological counter-narratives. Still the sheer diversity of approaches, objectives, mediums, scope and outcomes of these exclusive initiatives makes it difficult for the book to typify and then do a case study of that counter-narrative initiative. In fact, intensive or analytical study of select counter-narrative initiatives requires a separate, exclusively dedicated research project.

It is important to emphasize here that counter-narrative work as an area of public policy is still in its infancy and many of the suggestions made in this book are not conclusive. As there is still a paucity of case studies on counter-narrative campaigns to draw upon, recommendations for government and security forces given herein remain tentative. This book is primarily an attempt to introduce the subject of counter-narratives, particularly in the Indian subcontinent to initiate and encourage more research in the field.

1. Introduction: The War of Narratives

> That all war is a conflict of narratives is a premise worth considering.
>
> —Jon Hermann, *Nine Links in the Chain*[1]

> In war, narrative is much more than just a story. 'Narrative' may sound like a fancy literary word, but it is actually the foundation of all strategy, upon which all else—policy, rhetoric and action—is built.
>
> —Michael Vlahos[2]

Narratives matter. As synaptic networks of thought and memory, they forge the matrix of individual and collective consciousness. As ideational frameworks, they help define entities and explain processes in both the corporeal and abstract realms.[3] Even in the military and strategic domains, their proper conception and communication prove critical in directing the course and outcome of any mission or war.

In today's age of information and communications warfare, narratives are said to be "weaponised" for achieving clearly defined outcomes and decisive victories. In the new battlespace, Brad Allenby and Joel Garreau posit, narratives are developed and disseminated to undermine an opponent's confidence and sense of control, to compound confusion and complexity in the enemy ranks, as well as to create political and social schisms. Weaponised narratives are "used tactically, as part of explicit military or geopolitical conflict; or

strategically, as a way to reduce, neutralize, and defeat a civilization, state, or organization. Done well, it limits or even eliminates the need for armed force to achieve political and military aims."[4] To Jon Hermann, the battle of narratives influences both wars and post-war scenarios: "Narratives around a conflict solidify when the winners get to write history. Further, when a war is not won outright, both narratives survive. Sometimes, the losing side's narrative dies off. Other times, it persists or regenerates to spark a new conflict."[5]

Barring tactical wartime narratives that may purposely convey misleading psy-op messages, broad strategic narratives need to be clear and concise in their communication. They should explicitly enunciate the nature and identity of the threat, the rationale for undertaking the military campaign, and a clearly achievable end state. In fact, the strength of the official narrative often underscores the potency of the underlying strategy, as it reflects the clarity of intent, firmness of resolve and ease of communication down the hierarchical chain that not only boosts the morale of the forces but intimidates and weakens the will of the enemy. On the other hand, a muddled narrative rarely heralds a decisive victory.

The cost of ill-conceived strategic narratives may prove disastrous even for the mightiest of military coalitions. When former US President George W. Bush spelled the objectives of the so-called "Global War on Terrorism" (GWOT) in his speech on 20th September 2001, he said that the war "will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated".[6]

Many political military strategists and political observers at that time believed that the aim was too big and vague to achieve even for the world's mightiest military. The war narrative was criticised at that time and was later held responsible for unleashing a protracted, diffuse and a highly expensive military campaign across several theatres of the world, costing the US and world uncountable losses both in life and economic resources for several years, even as the menace of terrorism metastasized and spread. Thus, Jane Harman of the Wilson Center noted: "The 'war on terror' was always a misnomer. Terror is not our enemy; it is a tactic. Unfortunately, by framing our actions in a linguistically sloppy way, we have hurt our

narrative with several important groups."[7] Ira Chernus, professor at the University of Colorado, believes that the ideology underlying the war on terrorism led to a state of "perpetual war".[8] Similarly, Reese and Lewis lamented: "The War on Terror describes a vague enemy, opposes a 'tactic', has no clear measure of success, (and) privileges the state and the status quo".[9]

Thus, it was apparent to several strategic observers early on that the GWOT was losing its plot and even the Bush administration eventually acknowledged the problem. In 2004, then US President George W. Bush attempted a course correction. "We actually misnamed the war on terror," he admitted. "It ought to be the struggle against ideological extremists …"[10]

A year later, the president's views were elucidated by the then Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld: "Today we confront an enemy unburdened by bureaucracy or regulation—or any legal, moral or structural constraints. The enemy is not easily described. It is not a nation, not a religion, nor even one particular organisation. … Rather it is a shifting network of violent and fanatical adherents to violent extremist ideologies".[11]

The realisation for correction in the narrative had significant strategic implications. It was borne out of the costly understanding that no matter how many terrorist bases or infrastructure the US-led coalition forces might degrade and no matter how many terrorist leaders and operatives it might eliminate, the scourge of terrorism continued to spew new outfits and fighters because the threat was not properly identified.

Thus, the appellation 'Global War on Terror' (GWOT) gradually gave way to more precise and less ambitious sounding terminologies, such as Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE). The threat of terrorism was now associated with one of its root causes of 'radicalisation'—the ideological process through which an average person becomes a terrorist. Thus, the problem of radicalisation started gaining more attention in the global strategic community, as the abbreviation GWOT started losing currency.

Since 2005 onwards, several countries launched their indigenously developed de-radicalisation and disengagement

programmes and introduced several measures pertaining to specialised surveillance and detection of radicals and terrorists. Some of these measures covered old and new techniques of surveillance and deterrence, disengagement and prevention, social rehabilitation and reintegration.

However, these programmes have largely focused on measures to contain and mitigate the contagion of radicalism rather than develop antibodies against its viral dissemination and ideological messaging. By involving civil society institutions and engaging with community elders, religious leaders, schools and seminaries, various security agencies around the world have sought to drain the swamp of radicalism infesting various communities with programmes of psychological counselling and inter-community dialogue, vocational education, etc. However, the more daunting challenge of combating the extremist ideological messaging and countering the radical narrative has still not received the desired level of attention or success. This book makes a humble attempt at redressing this shortfall in the ongoing global campaign against violent extremism and terrorism (GCVET).

Although the book dwells into the issue of analysing and countering radical narratives, it particularly focuses on the threat posed by so-called global jihadist groups operating in South Asia. As terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS are deemed offshoots of the jihadist Salafism or Salafi jihadism movement (a name coined by Gilles Keppel),[12] the focus of this book is to study and counter the key concepts of this militant ideology.

A deviant sub-sect of Salafi-Wahhabism, the rabid ideology of Salafi jihadism evolved mainly in the 20th century. The militant ideologues of this extremist discourse of are mainly Syed Qutb, Mohammad Farag, Abdullah Azzam, Abu Musab Al Suri, Abu Muhammad Al Maqdisi, Abu Bakr Naji, Ayman Al Zawahiri, and Osama bin Laden.

With the exception of a few groups outside its doctrinal system (such as Hanafi-Deobandi groups like the Taliban in the Af-Pak region), Salafi jihadism is the mainstay of contemporary jihadist thought, which is driven by an apocalyptic agenda of unleashing a

world war against the entire international socio-political order with the aim of establishing a global caliphate.

The Narrative Marketplace

It would be important here to note the difference between a narrative and a story, be it a work of fiction or for that matter any other piece of prose. A narrative is the style and manner in which a story or an argument is told,[13] or the way in which a set of incidents, facts or ideas are described. Thus, one story or a set of incidents could generate several narratives and expositions, as every story or argument is invariably told from a subjective viewpoint and through an arbitrary assortment and construction of facts.

Thus all narratives present reality from a subjective perspective and are limited by personalised judgments that influence selection of words and images, the sequencing of incidents, and the framing of a plot in an attempt to impose coherent unity. Therefore, every story through the viewpoint of a different narrator always produces a different narrative or at least a slightly varied version of events and incidents. Even the same narrator at a different time may produce a slightly altered narration. And yet, the effectiveness of a narrative lies in its ability to convince the target audience of the objectivity of its account of facts or events.

Terrorist groups invest heavily on developing narratives to radicalise and recruit new members to their fold from the general populace. The purpose of such narratives is to ideologically brainwash impressionable youth and turn them into unscrupulous perpetrators of violence, willing to unquestioningly follow the commands of the terrorist leadership.[14]

To raise such a legion of psychotic fighters, terrorist groups produce radical narratives aimed at desensitising and dehumanising the minds of new recruits. This is achieved by subverting the faculties of rational thought and compassion, by creating a heightened degree of cognitive dissonance and emotional imbalance, until it is replaced by a sense of absolute inerrancy of faith and unflinching dedication to the radical cause. Not so strong in rationality, radical narratives often play upon emotional insecurities and inadequacies

of individuals and communities, by crying hoarse about imagined threats to their identity and existence and by calling for immediate, drastic and violent action needed for survival.

Aimed at overturning the existing geo-political order, the narratives of most terrorist groups produce an antithesis to the prevailing philosophies of life. In fact, these groups develop counter-narratives to mainstream socio-political ideas and beliefs, which in our times are mainly associated with liberal values of moderation and accommodation. Sticking to reason and more open to accepting criticism, the mainstream liberal narrative seems more vulnerable to the onslaught of radical ideologies in our times, whose message of uncompromising virulence appeals more to the restive and impressionable generation of our times.

Prone to exaggeration and sensationalism, narratives of radical groups have become the favourite staple of the commercial media. News outlets and television channels of the day openly broadcast contrarian views, which produce divergent and at times conflicting narratives around almost every news development. Add to this the large number of politically tempered "spins" or 'truthisms', 'fake news', rumours, hoaxes and conspiracy theories screaming for attention on the social media and the 'dark web', and we have the perfect recipe for radical extremism to thrive.

In fact, our world has become a marketplace for highly competing vocative, sensational and incredible narratives that radical and violent extremist groups peddle in ever larger numbers to disseminate their diabolical and incendiary political messages. This complex and highly diffuse environment has led many strategic experts to question the viability and effectiveness of counter-narrative campaigns, aimed at discrediting and defeating the spread of radical ideologies.

Do Counter-Narratives Work?

Although terrorist groups apparently have a lot of faith in the power of narratives in that they explain, give legitimacy and popularise their beliefs and actions, there is much scepticism among counter-radicalisation experts on whether counter-narratives can be devised

to negate the impact of violent narratives. A 2017 study by the European Parliament on counter-narratives claims that "the concept itself is rather underdeveloped and lacks a thorough grounding in empirical research".[15]

In fact, many strategic experts state that "actual evidence that counter-narratives are an effective method of minimising the impact of narratives and of preventing acts of violence is lacking".[16] Marc Sageman argues that radical propaganda does not necessarily attract impressionable minds, but mainly active extremists that look for constant directions and validation for their beliefs and actions.[17]

It is averred that counter-narratives are reactive and operate from within a flawed conceptual frame constructed by a radical argument. Thus they run the risk of unwittingly validating many hideous nuances and semantics.[18] Again, confrontational counter-narratives may initiate inconclusive, emotive argumentation that might aggravate extremism. Excessive publicity of counter-narratives popularising could draw more public attention to extremist narratives, which is the reason why many counter-radicalisation campaigns tend not to be too explicit about the radical message.

In addition, there are problems in determining the aims and objectives of counter-narrative campaigns. What should be the countervailing ideology of the counter-narrative campaign (be it implicit or explicit) for defeating the extremist ideology? Should it be liberal or even religious if need be? Should the campaign be directed against the radicalised who are quite hardened and impervious to persuasion, or should it target an entire community or just the supposedly vulnerable sections within it? Should the counter-narrative messaging focus more on the radical group's ideological or religious discourse, or to the difficult political or socio-cultural issues from where much of the resentment rises? Who determines the criteria and what should its features be for devising messages and is there a role for governments or civil society in this context?[19] How do we devise an effective metric for assessing the effectiveness of these campaigns? Is it only the community afflicted with the problem of radicalism that should develop and disseminate counter-narratives for them to be credible and effective?

Such complex questions have generated a degree of scepticism regarding the feasibility and effectiveness of counter-narratives, perhaps more than that of any other counter-radicalisation measure.

However, the case in favour of counter-narrative campaigns in equally compelling. Most counter-radicalisation measures (other than counter-narrative communication programmes) do not directly confront the radical message, which is the main source for instigating, justifying and radicalising ordinary, law abiding citizens and prompting them to carry out acts of violent extremism. The ideological challenge demands the development and dissemination of counter-narratives in order to rid the problem at the source.

Counter-radicalisation measures related to detection and surveillance, disengagement and prevention, as well as rehabilitation and reintegration—commendable and effective as they seem—are aimed at merely suppressing a malaise that continues to fester in society, yet remains largely unchallenged by counter arguments and counter messaging.

As extremist and terrorist groups seek to employ compelling messages and narratives to draw followers to their cause, it is important that counter-terrorism measures be also taken against radical and extremist groups in the ideological domain. There should also be a focus on developing effective counter narratives employing traditional and most advanced means of information dissemination.

Counter-Narratives: Their Three Types

A counter-narrative can be defined as a narrative devised to challenge the ideology, narratives, myths, stories and messages of violent extremists. To use the definition by Briggs and Feve, counter-narratives are "intentional and direct efforts to deconstruct, discredit and demystify violent extremist messaging, whether through ideology, logic, fact or humour".[20] Although the two scholars differentiate counter-narratives from alternative narratives and government strategic communications, the term counter-narratives is generally used to cover all the three categories.

It is said that counter-narratives can be both direct and indirect in their messaging and can be in the form of social activism where

one could deliver a message directly to the community, or it can take the shape of cultural activism and employ music, theatre, film or other forms of artistic expression to communicate counter-narrative messages.

It should be understood that there are many kinds of counter-narratives. One that directly counters the radical message, claim or argument are a category we normatively understand as a counter-narrative. However, there are alternative arguments that do not counter radical thought directly from the ideological frames set by the radical narrative, but which present a larger philosophical perspective from a different more holistic viewpoint. This is what we know as the alternative narrative. In addition, radical groups often message and discuss less about their own ideological outlook, for fear of exposing their own intellectual hollowness and deviousness, but emphasize more on the shortcomings of the adversary.

Therefore, any counter-narrative strategy should not restrict itself merely to the ideological or religious domains, but provide the relevant topical political, social, security, economic, historical counter-narratives as need be. Effective counter-narratives have to be prepared to cause an intellectual or spiritual impact on the mind of a prospective radical to deter him or her from joining the ranks of violent extremists, even if we may never know when the messaging would impact and to what extent. In this battle for hearts and minds, it would always be difficult to quantify the effect of a counter-narrative campaign on radicals or prospective radicals, yet that in itself should not be a pretext for not investing in counter-narrative campaigns.

The philosophy contesting radical thought would obviously espouse universalist and peace promoting ideals, even if it is grounded in the target readership's own religious, cultural or ideological contexts. One cannot counter message of hate with hate, but with sentiments of compassion, understanding and moderation. However, terrorist leaders and their criminal acts have to be projected in a negative light, and it is often necessary to expose the grievous harm and extent of damage radical terrorist actions cause to innocent lives, human and natural resources, etc.

This book discusses mainly three types of counter-narratives:

- Strategic communications carried out by government agencies to raise awareness and inform average citizens as well as communities vulnerable to radicalisation about government development schemes and policies. This kind of a narrative clarifies and negates misinformation by radical groups and directly deconstructs, discredits and demystifies violent, extremist messaging through verifiable government actions and pronouncements.
- Alternative narratives developed and circulated by both government and non-government agencies regarding the positive value of national cohesion and tolerance, as well as patriotism and commitment to the national cause.
- Counter-narratives generated by governments, religious scholars, reclaimed radicals and community elders that negate false and devious misinformation and claims made by radical groups about religious teachings, government policies and actions of security agencies and administrative bodies.

The Process of Developing Counter-Narratives

The initiation of any strategic communications programme involving any counter-narrative campaign terrorist groups should follow the steps listed below.

- **First Step: Know the Narrative:** The first step towards developing counter-narratives against the radicalisation of terrorist organisations should be to first study not only the terrorist narrative but also the intricacies of the style and themes thereof, along with the factors employed for enhanced resonance. The third chapter of this book is dedicated to the study of the narrative.
- **Second Step: Gain Expertise in Ideological/Religious/Historical Outlook:** In order to understand the mental make-up of the terrorist/violent extremist movement, it is important to have a deep scholarly understanding of political and extremist narratives—their socio-political or religious worldview, which the fourth chapter studies in depth.

The extent of psychological and subliminal messaging in radical studies should be studied and made use of in counter-narratives as well. In this book, religious counter-narratives against so-called jihadist groups have been discussed in Chapter 6.

- **Third Step: Deconstructing the Radical Narrative:** The next step would be to identify the fundamental concepts as well as the key thematic strands employed to build the radical argument. This exercise would include finding the causal linkages (both rational and emotional) that join these ideas into a narrative superstructure. There are various ways in which the structure of an extremist narrative can be unravelled after going through the above-mentioned steps. For deconstructing any narrative, we ought to expose the flaws in the causal links joining the separate narrative strands, which link one incident, idea or emotion with the other, by exposing their logical anomalies and internal contradictions. The other technique for deconstructing the narrative would be to expose emotional manipulation and propaganda techniques employed to fudge reality. The third method could be to expose how the terrorist ideology is not the correct, but a diabolical representation of its source ideology or religion, thereby delegitimising its cause and identity. These are discussed in Chapter 5 in detail.

- **Fourth Step: Counter-Narratives, Alternate Narratives, and Master Narratives:** As stated above, the decoding and deconstruction of the terrorist narrative itself paves the way for developing counter-narratives to its arguments. In addition, narratives with positive messages about the state and the government, communal harmony, etc., should be developed, which would complement mere responses and negations of terrorist claims and assertions.

  Master narratives that expound and extol the founding principles of the state, based on the country's constitutional values and ideals of peace, non-violence, justice, and the rule of law, etc., should be widely disseminated through various media outlets, in educational material and even in documentaries screened before feature films.

- **Fifth Step: Counter-Narrative Delivery Mechanisms:** Counter-narratives need to be developed in sync with the perceptions and needs of the target audience and the suitability of the agents and medium for delivering the message. Thus, the role of the mediums for message dissemination also plays an important role not only in the form and style but even in the content development of counter-narratives. Therefore, this variable needs to be understood, while devising counter-narratives.

The Challenge of Combating So-called 'Jihadist' Groups

This study opposes the linking of 'Islam' and the term 'jihad' with terrorism. However, in the absence of an alternate universally accepted terminology, it settles for the phrase 'jihadists' as it is widely used among the wider academic community (although 'Jihad' means righteous struggle and not 'holy war' or terrorism as practiced by violent Muslim non-state actors of modern times).

The book provides some counter-narratives against the religious discourse of terrorist groups. However, it has refrained from giving counter-narratives against the political, historical, social, cultural and economic narratives of jihadist groups because of the thematic complexities that would overreach the scope of this book. This study also does not cover Shiite jihadist discourse, given the fact that it has not become a major radicalising force around the world, even though its influence has been rising in West Asia.

Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 been dedicated to presenting thematic concepts that can be used for developing religious counter-narratives, and have been proposed after extensively studying Islamic scriptures and authorised religious scholarly works, which clearly prohibit and proscribe the violent and extremist actions of the so-called jihadists.

For the purpose of decoding radical narratives, this study also presents the master narratives of global terror groups such as Al-Qaeda and the ISIS; the narratives and declared end-state goals of Pak-based terror organisations; and the narrative of indigenous Muslim terror outfits. However, the book does not make any authoritative claim regarding the genuineness of these assertions, despite having conducted in-depth research while making the claims.

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2. Psychological Messaging to Counter Terrorism

> Terrorism is a psychological warfare. Terrorists try to manipulate us and change our behaviour by creating fear, uncertainty and division in society.
>
> —Patrick J. Kennedy[1]

It has been argued that "acts of terror themselves are propaganda by deed and, as such, strategic communications will always be a central part of counterterrorism".[2]

In fact, the intended targets of terrorism are not necessarily the people killed or maimed by its violence, but the wider public, the government and security forces who receive the terrifying news. As a means of communication, violence is meant to shock and cause an emotional and cognitive dissonance in the minds of the masses, and is the first assault of radicalism on impressionable minds.

By delivering a mental and emotional shock, terrorist attacks seek to create cognitive wedge in the consciousness of the vulnerable for radical ideas to stream in. Thus, terrorism as a mode of asymmetric warfare is principally fought more at the psychological and ideological plane than at the conventional battleground. Therefore, the threat needs to be fought at the level of the human psyche.

For their part, terrorist groups not only invest heavily in overt forms of communication but lace their radical literature with layers of emotive and subliminal messages that impact the subconscious mind. Therefore, it becomes necessary for nations and societies to develop effective counter-messages to blunt the psychologically disturbing impact of violent imagery and motifs in radical propaganda.

Attempts at developing and disseminating counter-narratives to check radical ideologies have only recently started picking up momentum, with various governments, international organisations, private companies, religious scholars, and strategic experts gradually joining in the campaign. One of the reasons for this slow progress is that every country and had culture is taking time to develop its own strategic communications programme in keeping with the particularities of its culture and the unique complexity of its problems.

Information Warfare of the Radicalising Kind

This chapter intends to focus on how counter-narratives are integral to the domain of strategic communications, which assumes greater significance in developing any strategy against terrorist groups and their radicalisation campaign. Psychological warfare is a key component of strategic communication and therefore counter-narratives need to be integral to any strategy campaign involving psy-op strategies.

Conventional militaries have never historically employed psychological warfare as the mainstay of their strategies, and resort to them only as the proverbial 5th Dimension of Warfare.[3] In fact, psychological operations only form a subset of Information Warfare that generally does not extend beyond defensive tactics (such as assurance, honey pots, etc.) and offensive tactics (such as deny, degrade, exploit) employed against an enemy. Conversely, terrorist groups accord greater importance to ideologically and psychologically radicalising people through a host of ever-evolving methods by using advanced Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that makes them transnational by design.

According to noted strategist Ariel Merari, "Terrorist strategy does not vie for a tangible control of territory. Notwithstanding the fact that terrorists try to impose their will on the general population and channel its behaviour by sowing fear, this influence has no geographical demarcation lines. Terrorism as a strategy does not rely on 'liberated zones' as staging areas for consolidating the struggle and carrying it further. As a strategy, terrorism remains in the domain of psychological influence ..."[4]

Thus, terrorist groups wish to win over people more than territory by employing hate, anger and fear instead of reason as their means of ideological persuasion. Thus, they turn ordinary, law-abiding citizens against the state. Conventional militaries, security agencies have to eventually confront radicalised civilians as enemy combatants,. As Jerome Post put it: "Terrorism is a vicious species of psychological warfare waged through the media. It is a war for hearts and minds. If one accepts this premise, then the war against terrorism will not be won with smart bombs and missiles. One does not counter psychological warfare with high-tech weapons."[5]

Psychological warfare has been defined as "the planned use of communications to influence human attitudes and behavior. It consists of political, military, and ideological actions conducted to induce in target group groups behavior, emotions, and attitudes that support the attainment of national objectives."[6]

To borrow words from Sun Tsu's famous treatise *The Art of War*, psychological operations "subdue the enemy without fighting".[7] In fact, the term psychological operations, especially when combined with political warfare, denotes "operations, whether tactical or strategic, on the battlefield or in the theater, in peacetime or in war, directed primarily at our adversary's mind rather than his body."[8]

The aims of psychological operations used in counter-terrorism have been detailed as:[9]
- inhibiting potential terrorists from joining terrorist groups
- producing dissension within groups
- facilitating exit from groups
- reducing support for groups and their leaders

Psychological operations can be conducted by various means of dissemination: face-to-face communication, print media (pamphlets, books, magazines, etc.), audio visual means (television), audio media (radio or loudspeaker), visual media or the digital domain.[10]

Psy-ops have been divided into three categories: tactical, strategic and consolidation activities. 'Tactical psy-ops' target specific enemy combat groups in order to induce them to perform a specific action to affect the current or short-range combat situation. 'Strategic psy-ops' target a wider audience (often the general public in order to gain

sympathy and support as well as funding and recruits). This involves a carefully planned campaign. The third category is of 'consolidation psy-ops', which assists authorities or terrorists in consolidating their gains as well as in establishing control and maintaining order in an occupied or liberated area.[11]

With the advent of the Internet, terrorists are exploiting the digital domain to spread their ideas in revolutionary ways. In addition to generating videos, websites, blogs, tweets and a host of social media, they create online environments in the Dark Web that serve as virtual meeting places for people sharing a common cause.[12]

In fact, the digital domain facilitates recruitment, radicalisation, training, planning, fund-raising and cyber-attacks. In response, online counter-radicalisation efforts have fallen short of making significant progress thus far.

Strategic Communication

It was in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks that US official Vince Vitto, Chairman of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Managed Information Dissemination, used the phrase 'strategic communication' in the realm of strategic studies.[13]

Since then this term has become integral to any discourse on the subject of psychological warfare. In order to build effective psy-ops programmes it has become important to formulate well defined and coherently developed strategic communication campaigns, involving a proper diagnosis of the nature, scope, and extent of the enemy's ideological influence on any society, a conducive and custom-made communications strategy with the right message, agencies and means of dissemination as well as clearly enunciated short, medium and long term objectives.

For its part, strategic communication has been defined as, "the synchronization of images, actions and words to achieve a desired effect."[14] There are key elements of any communication that should be worked out synchronously in order to make any communication successful seamlessly. In this respect, Lasswell's model of verbal and linear communication was outdone by the Shannon and Weaver model in 1949,[15] whose elements included

the barrier of noise and the element of feedback from. The elements of the model are:

- **Source**: This simply refers to the producer of a message or sequence of messages to be communicated to the receiver. The source should produce a message that has a clear concept, as well as objectives.

- **Sender**: It refers to the transmitter that operates on the message in some way to produce a signal suitable for transmission through its medium or channel. The sender and the source must be in sync in their understanding of the message. Ideally, a multiplicity of senders should be avoided to avoid different versions of the message being sent, which may lead to unintended confusion. There should be minimal extraneous disturbance or 'noise' in the transmission.

- **Message**: It constitutes the concept, information, communication, or statement that is sent in a verbal, written, recorded, or visual form to the recipient. The style and form of the message should have ideational, emotional, and subliminal conformity with its content, and should be persuasive in changing the attitude or behaviour of the intended audience.

- **Channel**: This is the medium used to transmit the signal from transmitter to receiver. The medium has to be the one most suitable to reach the intended audience. It should have accessibility and acceptability with the audience. It is said that the channels of communication can be visual, auditory, tactile (such as in Braille), olfactory, electromagnetic, digital or biochemical.

- **Receiver**: It is the end that receives the message and performs the inverse operation of what is done by the transmitter, by decoding or reconstructing the message from the signal. The message should be easy to decode for the receiver and so should be in sync with its level of comprehension. The receiver or receivers of the message should be very clearly defined by the source and sender, even the effect of the message on each one of the receivers should be anticipated and analysed by the sender at the time of transmission.

- **Destination**: It is the intended receiver for whom message is sent, which may not be the first or direct receiver and could enjoy the facility of sending feedback in a communication.

From this description, one can derive that the following elements and processes are involved in any communication:

- The formulation of the cause, motive, motivation or reason behind sending a message.
- The composition of the message with its internal and technical ingredients.
- The encoding of communication, be it direct and indirect, cryptic subliminal and emotional, the written/oral/pictorial/digital or body language, etc.
- Transmission of the encoded message through the most suitable channel or medium.
- Disturbance, noise, and extraneous factors such as natural forces and, in some cases, human activity (both intentional and accidental) can influence the transmission from the sender to one or more receivers.
- The receiving of the encoded message from a sequence of received signals.
- Decoding and resonance of the message.
- Interpreting and comprehending the presumed message. This could be influenced by conducive or detrimental extraneous factors at that time.

Again, the flow of communication cannot be in only one direction. Thus, it can be:

- *Linear*: This works in one direction only; a sender encodes some message and sends it through a channel for a receiver to encode.
- *Interactive*: In this form of communication, people send and receive messages in a responsive fashion.
- *Transactional Model*: Information is sent and received simultaneously through a busy channel and has to be sifted through several other communication channels.

Psy-Ops against Radicalisation

When it comes to counter-narratives against radicalism, certain important facts must be noted. Prior to their use in combating radicalisation of civilian communities, counter-narratives were

mainly used against conventional enemies, such as state actors, to mainly discredit their claims lower their morale and to lionise and highlight the accomplishments of the country's leadership, military and security forces. The message was often to warn and instil fear in the hearts of the enemy to deter them from engaging in military actions again.

However, the nature of strategic communication against radicalism is different. Here, the target audience is not the enemy but mainly the vulnerable sections of the indigenous population that the radical groups or enemy state seek to wean away to their cause. Therefore, the intent of counter-narrative messaging here is to build resilience among members of the country's native population against the radical insinuations of the enemy. For this purpose, conventional psy-ops methodology which generally conveys military superiority or disseminates deceptive messages to gain tactical victory may not be applicable in the fight against radicalisation.

Strategic communication with members of vulnerable communities targeted by radicalising forces has to be honest and as transparent as possible. The tenor of the language should also be more compassionate and persuasive, as opposed to be commanding or brusque. One may use messages of hate to denigrate enemy forces, but the underlying mood in the messages should be mild and moderate, evoking sentiments of familial kinship and sense of belongingness among fellow countrymen. Segments of population that may feel disillusioned should be courted with missives of reassurance and compassion. It has been found that religious leaders win over converts not so much by the substance of their talk, but with the empathetic and genial style of their conduct and acts of generosity.

In addition, strategic communication of counter-narratives should ideally come from single source to ensure thematic consistency with no other government channel or source offering a variant message. The source of the message should always place national interest above any political, electoral or parochial interest while delivering the message. It is usually difficult for democratic countries to develop national narratives on a wide variety of national issues

as the balance between individual freedoms and national interests appear difficult to manage in matters related to counter-narrative messaging. Public misapprehensions over the state narrative or the transmission of contradicting messages by political parties blunt the effectiveness of counter-radicalisation messaging.

Portrait of the 'Target Audience'

It is always important to correctly profile (as much as possible) the demographics of the core audience of a counter-narrative campaign. These demographics could cover several categories, ranging from their social and economic background, caste and religious denominations, the gender/age proportion, kinds and levels of educational attainments (modern schools or tradition/religious seminary), modes of vocation and occupation, etc. A survey of these demographic categories help deliver more resonant counter-narratives for the intended audience. Often, the task of identification of the target audience often done by radical groups, who spread their message to a particular section of the population.

Marketing campaigns often devise techniques for identifying their target audience and for promoting their products based on their behavourial patterns and preferences. These psychological techniques could be employed as they are very persuasive and can develop customers out of the general public. Marketing experts differentiate between a 'target market' and a 'target audience'. A 'target market' is the group of people towards whom an entire strategic communications campaign is directed. However, the 'target audience' refers to particular sections within the target market, which is the quickest in receiving and disseminating the message in the target market.[16]

It is often the level of motivation generated in the target audience by the campaigns, which then starts to resonate with the central audience of the target market and thereafter it might even impact the 'peripheral audience', previously considered most resistant to the content of the message.

When it comes to counter-narratives devised against radicalisation, it must be remembered that messages of counter-

terrorism should mainly focus on people who are ambivalent about terrorism. This point should be obvious to most campaign designers, but many times counter-narratives resonate more with people opposed to terrorism than those placed precariously close to the ideological precipice.

Counter-narratives are also often mistakenly conceived to discredit and demonise radical and terrorist groups in the eyes of a rival community or members of the 'Other' group that may never send a recruit to the opposing side. Instead, counter-narratives should focus on those segments of the population that are vulnerable to the radical message, but are still undecided and yet susceptible to its influence. The focus should be on the section most likely to join the ranks of the terrorists.

Thus, there are three reasons for identifying the target audience:[17]

- To ensure one is creating the right content for the right section of the population most vulnerable to the radical influence.
- To better understand how to create content that connects with the intended audience.
- To insulate and firewall large sections of this population from the radical messages emanating from fringe elements.

In the words of Bertjaan Doosje and Jaan Jaap van Eerten, "majority of people have a shield of resilience against extremist influences."[18] The purpose of counter-narratives is to buttress this resilience among the vulnerable sections of the population against extremist discourse and so the target audience for any counter-narrative is not the violently extreme and already radicalised sections but the large section of any particularly community that terrorist groups target to get more recruits from.

Research has found that there is no clear profile for the typical terrorist. In the words of Jonathan Rae, such attempts "emphasise their crude reductionism, an absence of internal and external validity, and their lack of practical application. Current evidence indicates that the profiling of terrorists is a futile venture".[19]

Still, while campaigning against jihadist radicalisation, it would be important to focus on the most likely segment of the population

a terrorist organisation would expect to gain its recruits from. These could range from "ignorant novices who view joining as a rite of passage to die-hard militants looking for combat and martyrdom, while individuals that go for humanitarian reasons are often kidnapped or forced to fight".[20]

Borrowing from the discipline of marketing, if we have to narrow the target market to target audience, we need to focus on an impressionable youth as the most likely candidates to join terrorist ranks (from mid-teens to the age of 30). In the case of jihadist groups, the prospective recruit usually receives madrassa or college education, has rudimentary or below average understanding of political or religious knowledge, is generally disturbed by the world's socio-political and security related issues and is sympathetic to a Manichean 'us' versus 'them' worldview. The imaginary sketch of such a youth should be drawn while conceiving the target audience of a counter-narrative campaign.

A survey on social media of such youth, even interaction on the 'dark web' with prospective recruits for radical groups, could help identify the common motivations and triggers, issues and interests, grievances and aspirations of the prospective radical. In fact, it might be worthwhile to develop this audience's persona, a standardised fictional profile of the prospective radical's character, while developing counter-narrative content and devising the best medium for disseminating the message.

If it is difficult to conceptualise a single representative profile, a few profiles covering the most important characteristics of personality, family, gender, job, income, location, grievances and aspirations can be developed. Surveillance of social media and in field surveys could help refine the understanding of the prospective radical in a particular region or location for any given campaign.

In addition, a selection of all radical literature—be it in the form of books, literature found in seminaries, print collateral and pamphlets, vernacular or national/international publications, online content, social media video, audio and other forms of communication—should be compiled and studied. By parsing the key subjects and issues highlighted, their style of provocation and

modes of syntactical, figurative and emotive persuasion employed, as well as the use of factoids and misinformation linked to construct radical arguments, counter messaging narratives should be devised to deconstruct and unravel radical arguments.

In addition to developing effective psychological techniques against radical ideologies, particularly jihadism, it would be important to study the challenge of ideological warfare, by first understanding the complexities of ideological narration, both in its literary form (as is evident in fiction) as well as its political and revolutionary variant. The subsequent chapter seeks to develop this understanding in order to extend the scope beyond psychological warfare and into the realm of ideological counter-narratives.

Notes

1. Congressman Kennedy used these words to introduce the National Resilience Development bill of 2003 (H.R.3774, 108th Cong.) aimed at enhancing Americans psychological resilience to terrorist threats and attacks. The bill was referred to the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security in 2004 with no further action.

2. 'Countering Terrorist Narratives: Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs', Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Directorate General for Internal Policies of the European Union PE 596. 829, November 2017 at https://info.publicintelligence.net/EU-CounteringTerroristNarratives.pdf.

3. Jerald M. Post, 'Psychological Operations and Counter-Terrorism', *Joint Force Quarterly* (JFQ), Issue 37, 2004.

4. Ariel Merari, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 5, No. 4, Winter, 1993, pp. 213-251.

5. Ibid.

6. Alvin H. Bernstein, 1998, 'Political Strategies in Coercive Diplomacy and Limited War,' in Lord and Barnett, *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations*, 145.

7. Lionel Giles (translation), *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, Special edition books. 2007.

8. Ibid.

9. Jerald M. Post, 'Psychological Operations and Counter-Terrorism', *Joint Force Quarterly* (JFQ), Issue 37, 2004.

10. Ed Rouse, 2019, "Psychological Operations/Warfare", Psywarrior website, accessed on June 29, 2020.

11. Rodger A. Bates and Mara Mooney Clayton, 'Psychological Operations and Terrorism: The Digital Domain', *The Journal of Public and Professional Sociology*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, July 2, 2014 at https://pdfs. semanticscholar. org/3194/c7ad51ede207e005f2c9f712372de47d5b8f. pdf.

12. Ibid.

13. 'Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Managed Information Dissemination', Washington, D.C., October 2001.

14. Robert T. Hastings Jr., 'DoD Principles of Strategic Communication', August, US Department of Defence, 2008.

15. Claude Elwood Shannon, 'A Mathematical Theory of Communication' (PDF), *The Bell System Technical Journal*, 1948, p. 55.

16. Alan Andreasen, 'Social Marketing: Its definition and domain', *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, Vol. 13, 1994, pp. 108-114.

17. Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong, *Marketing: An Introduction*, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 2005.

18. Jan-Jaap van Eerten and Bertjan Doosje, *Challenging Extremist Views on Social Media: Developing a Counter-Messaging Response*, Routledge, 2019.

19. Jonathan Rae, 'Will it Ever be Possible to Profile the Terrorist?', *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 2012.

20. Rachel Briggs and Ross Frenett, 'Foreign fighters, the challenge of counter-narratives', Policy Brief, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, London, 2014 at http://www.strategicdialogue.org/Foreign_Fighters_paper_for_website_ v0.6.pdf, accessed on July 23, 2015.

3. Narrative: The Construct of Consciousness

> The most powerful person in the world is the storyteller. The storyteller sets the vision, values, and agenda of an entire generation that is to come.
>
> —Steve Jobs[1]

What is a Narrative: Matrix of Intelligence

Stories and narratives have been in existence since the beginning of human communication and have helped in developing faculties of perception and comprehension, as well as in the formulation of language itself.[2]

According to Carl Jung, widely regarded as co-founder of modern psycho-analytical movement along with Sigmund Freud, "Narration is part of human consciousness itself, as is manifest in our natural faculty to construct dreams and to develop and resonate with legends and mythical archetypes".[3]

The human mind has an innate tendency to make narrative connections between events, people and ideas both within the everyday space-time construct and even out of it. This is an almost continuous exercise of human thought and consciousness. In brilliant minds, the faculty finds underlying patterns and links even in the most heterogeneous of objects, events and concepts that leads to the creation of not only great works of art, but also of brilliant mathematical discoveries and breakthroughs in science.

Thus, narratives are essential not only for constructing fantastic works of fiction, but also for providing causal explanations of

radical philosophical concepts as well as mathematical and scientific summations. Experts of narrative studies or 'narratology' have developed a concept called 'Homo Narrans' that explores the way human beings shape their world through the stories they tell.[4]

Stories and narratives are found in all cultures and understood by all humans, irrespective of their level of education or mode of upbringing. Stories grab public attention easily and remain in collective consciousness much longer than expository treatises, as they are easy to memorise. Powerful narratives create myths, legends and heroes, bestowing esteem and pride in an individual or a group and help develop collective identity and cultural ethos.

Highly developed social and political narratives even provide an "organizing framework for action".[5] At the same time, both literary and non-literary narratives tread the borderline between fiction and nonfiction and create a "fictionality of reality"[6] that is often difficult to unravel and separate.

As stated above, narratives bind people together into a socio-cultural and political fraternity, with common traditions, values and a distinctive sense of identity. A corpus of common literature, language, traditions, beliefs and values helps forge groups, organisations, religious communities, political groups and movements as well as nations. By "organizing and synthesizing multiple and scattered events in time and space",[7] human beings "come to know, understand and make sense of the world"[8] around them, and forge their social identities. Thus, narratives have also been called, "equipments of living".[9]

Stories and narratives help popularise profound philosophical and spiritual ideas by exemplifying them through anecdotes, tales, myths, allegories and slogans so that even the less educated or intelligent members of a community develop a profound outlook on life and a common code of conduct and manners.

Thus, narratives help build collective identities and develop for their intended communities a common social, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, national or linguistic heritage. In the words of Mark Laity, head Chief of Strategic Communications at SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe), NATO's military

headquarters, "A narrative with historical overtones, an emotive connection and credibility not only convinces people, it frames the points of reference they use to evaluate the decision they are being asked to make."[10]

The study of the narrative mainly belongs to the realm of fiction in literature, pertaining to the development of story in novels, drama, screenplay, short story, etc. However, since ancient times narratives have been used for political purposes by rulers and leaders of nations and tribes, political parties and movements, ethnic groups and religions. Various communities use narratives to justify the causes of their emergence, to present diagnoses of the problems they face, to expose supposed conspiracies and intrigues of adversaries and to present a method for a successful struggle in order to resolve a socio-political challenge.

In modern history, the role of public participation in determining the course of political change increased with the rise of ideological mass movements, such as democratic liberalism, Marxism, anarchism, fascism, etc. With the end to monarchy and feudalism, the claim to political power changed from the concept of divine right of Kings or the class system of feudal order to the new dynamic of social contract between the governed and the government. This has given rise to the concept of republicanism, wherein people hold political sovereignty. Therefore the role of political narratives, in garnering public support for political causes as well as for governance, has become critical in modern politics.

Various methods of political persuasion and means for influencing public perception and opinions are employed in electoral politics of our times to manufacture consent and alter the electorate's behaviour. The marketing of emotive political ideas often becomes more decisive a factor in elections than the successes or failures of government policies and performance.

Evolving Definition: Story versus Discourse

Generally speaking, a narrative is a spoken or written account of connected events or thoughts of significance in a story or a discourse, delivered by a speaker or writer (called a narrator) to a

specific audience. In other words, a narrative is the chronological or coherent sequencing of events, or the chain of rational and emotional concepts and sentiments, developed to win the attention and approval of a target audience towards an explicitly stated or implicitly conveyed rational or emotional idea. This definition may apply to both literary and political narratives.

In fact, it is claimed that every person constantly makes narratives about experiences and issues facing his or her life. The accounts of two people witnessing the same event at the same time vary to some degree, showing us the subjective nature of narratives. Thus, narratives have been described as "fundamental to understanding who we are, as well as in making sense of the world around us, and in communicating to each other".[11]

The field of study dedicated to the structure and function of narratives is called 'narratology'. As narratives are essentially the preserve of story writers, they have been traditionally studied by experts of literary criticism. With increasing use of narratives in non- fictional walks of life, such as politics and radicalism, etc., the definition and scope of narratives has steadily evolved.

For experts of literary criticism, like Hinyard and Kreuter, a narrative is "any cohesive and coherent story with an identifiable beginning, middle and end that provides information about scene, characters, and conflict; raises unanswered questions or unresolved conflict, and provides resolution".[12]

However, even in the literary field, Gerald Prince refined the definition by calling it "the recounting (as product and process, object and act, structure and structuration) of one or more real or fictitious events communicated by one, two or several (more or less overt) narrators to one, two or several (more or less overt) narrates".[13]

According to Michael J. Toolan a narrative is "a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events".[14] The phrase 'non-randomly connected events' implies that a narrative is not a naturally inter-connected series of events but is an artificially organised set of incidents.

However, with the rise of narratives in the field of politics, the understanding of the term 'narrative' has moved away from mere sequencing of events into a story towards the art of piecing together sentiments felt in certain sections of society into a political discourse.

Thus, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) have described a narrative as a way in which "social actors produce, represent and contextualize their experience and personal knowledge".[15]

The exponents of narratology have divided narratives into three strands:

- The first strand in defining a *narrative is that it is a sequence of events* and the theorists focus on the narrative itself independent of the medium used. The exponents of this understanding of narrative are said to be the formalist Vladimir Propp (1968), structuralists Claude Lévi-Strauss, Tzvetan Todorov (1977), and early Roland Barthes (1977). Here, a narrative tells a string of incidents as part of a story.

- The second strand sees *narrative as a discourse*. The representatives of this view are the successors of Gérard Genette, Mieke Bal (1985), and Seymour Chatman (1978). Here, narrative is not restricted to the age-old concept of incident-based story-telling, but involves the methods used to formulate ideological arguments with the systematic sequencing of facts and concepts.

- The third view of the *narrative is that it is a complex artifact*, the meaning of which is endowed by the receiver. This definition is supported by Roland Barthes (2004), Umberto Eco (1979), and Jean Francois Lyotard (1991), who employ a post-structuralist approach. According to this concept, a narrative is not merely a textual or a verbal juxtaposition of events, emotions or ideas, but may also involve pictures, paintings, sculpture, music, dance, movies, philosophical and scientific theories as well as other cultural archetypes.

Strategic Narrative

As suggested above, narratives develop a chronological and causal chain of events, emotions and ideas that generally culminate to a higher and climactic event, profound concept or emotional crescendo, ideally in a coherent resolution.

This final resolution often underscores the explicit or implicit idea that the narrator intended to convey to the reader or the audience from the beginning—not only to its conscious mind, but even to its subconscious self. Thus, implicit ideas hiding in a storyline are often learnt subliminally, especially by young and impressionable minds. This explicit or implicit concept around which a narrative is constructed is called a 'narrative idea'.

A narrative idea is usually the reason a story or an intellectual discourse is constructed. To be highly resonant and effective, it needs to be simple, coherent and emotional in appeal, so that it is easily understood, accepted and remembered. Curiously, narratives are rarely effective when neutral. They are most effective when projecting a subjective point of view and are most potent in taking a clear and unique stance on issues.

The narrative idea is often delivered into the mind of a target audience through rational and emotional messaging, with the intention of changing the person's outlook and perception and sometimes even to influence the receiver's behavior in accordance with the message or instruction latent in the narrative idea.

Propagandists often use argument fallacies and mind manipulation techniques to subliminally convince a target audience with ideas that an audience would otherwise reject in the full light of rationality.

Former spokesman for the US Department of Defence, Robert T. Hastings, wrote in a paper entitled 'DoD Principles of Strategic Communication' that strategic communication involves "the synchronization of images, actions and words to achieve a desired effect".[16] Perhaps, the word synchronisation in this statement could be compared with the process of narration itself.

Thus, when narratives are employed as part of strategic communications, they are disseminated with a specifically tailored purpose. In the Introduction, we discussed how narratives help in forging identity and even in 'organising a framework for action'.

When it comes to devising strategic communications for the corporate world, political parties, revolutionary movements, terrorist groups or even national and international organisations,

narratives play a critical role in developing individual or group identity, ideology, as well as vision for the future, in a rationally and emotionally compelling manner. In his article for the *Harvard Business Review*, Mark Bonchek has given a lucid definition of strategic narrative for the corporate world. The same definition could apply in the political domain:

> A strategic narrative is a special kind of story. It says who you are as a company. Where you've been, where you are, and where you are going. How you believe value is created and what you value in relationships. It explains why you exist and what makes you unique.[17]

Over the centuries, narrators have depended heavily on three Aristotlean 'proofs' of persuasion, namely 'Ethos', 'Pathos' and 'Logos' for developing stories. The first among these three concepts is 'Ethos', which is the Greek word for 'character'. According to Aristotle, every narrative or mode of persuasion depends on the author's credibility or 'character' for its acceptance by an audience. Therefore, the right qualification, respect and the correct use of language, clothes, mannerisms, syntax, etc. lend credibility to the narrator or channel of communication used to deliver the message.

The second component of this 'strategic rhetoric' is 'Pathos', which refers to the emotional appeal of a narrative. In the political domain, the intent of the narrative is either to evoke sentiments of sympathy towards a particular cause or sentiment of hate and anger in order to prompt radical action. The Greek word for 'suffering', pathos is the root word for the English words 'empathy', as well as 'pathetic'. Pathos can be evoked by using emotionally evocative platitudes that replace rational justification with sentimental causes to validate reprehensible actions, such as seduction and revenge, etc.

The third component of a narrative is 'Logos', which in Greek means 'word' and signifies 'the word or that by which the inward thought is expressed.' Logos simply refers to the main content of a message—the facts and statistics, the claims and contestations, the analyses and analogies. In fact, the word logic is derived from

the word 'logos' and this part refers to the main rationale of the narrative idea or message.

In addition to these, Aristotle also added 'Kairos', referring to the time and place for the effective delivery of a message. However, he is said to have emphasized 'Ethos' and 'Pathos' as more important for delivering effective strategic communication and narratives than 'logos', as crowds are persuaded more by emotion and credibility than by the argument of a narrator.

Political and Radical Narratives

Although 'narratology' as a discipline has been studied in literary fiction in depth for a long time, the concept of 'political narrative' has become a subject of academic discussion and research only in recent decades.[18] Therefore, the study of political narratives is still at a nascent and exploratory level.

Political narratives play a very important role in formulating and selling policy programmes or in positioning forceful 'meta-narratives' of political ideologies such as liberalism, fascism, communism, Islamism, etc.[19]

Revolutionary political ideologies and movements, particularly those espousing violent overthrow of extant socio-political institutions and regimes, develop highly efficient and incendiary political narratives that play a central role in the revolutionary uprising. These violent and uncompromising narratives are used to radicalise, recruit, disseminate propaganda material and provide strategic instruction for future action of the campaign. In fact, the political philosophies of liberalism and communism were considered radical in their early stages, as they sought to overturn the feudal and later capitalist order of their times. The word radical comes from the Latin adjective 'radicalis', which means "of or relating to a root". The noun 'radix' means the 'root'. However, in political discourse the noun *radical* came to be applied to a person seeking to fundamentally transform government, society or conventional ideology. It is ironic that today radicalism has become synonymous with religious extremism, the very philosophy that liberalism and communism once opposed as radical revolutionaries.

Like fictional narrative, political narratives are also highly selective and arbitrary in their ways of finding meaning and purpose in a disjointed reality. For example, the US Democratic Party champions government regulation for safeguarding the economy, whereas the Republican Party advocates free market system for greater development. However, every US government, run by either of the two parties, employs both principles to varying degrees.

Thus, "individual events acquire their meaning only in relation to other events through a process of *emplotment* that creates syntagmatic (i.e., discursive) links between isolated episodes. This process results in discursive totalities—narratives—that reconfigure the relation between past, present, and future. Hence, narratives are tools to understand, negotiate, and make sense of situations we encounter."[20]

This facility of constructing different narratives from the same set of events is what allows political rivals, governments and terrorists to have different versions of stories and narratives about same events and issues simultaneously. "Temporality and contexuality, selectivity and multiplicity can thus be identified as key elements of viewing political violence and terrorism through a narrative lens."[21]

However, there are some differences between a fictional narrative and a political narrative. A fictional narrative is usually based entirely on events and incidents, but a politically narrative stresses more on the inherent message it believes lies behind any story or narration than the story and its aesthetic appeal. Therefore, political narrative is more of a broad discourse than a story, which may make use of several stories or affiliate ideological strands to promote a grand narrative idea. This 'grand narrative', can also be understood in the context of the post-modernist understanding of the 'Meta-narrative', described at length below.

Literary fiction is primarily written for the sake of art and literary writing—restrained by conventions, even genre limitations—mainly seeks to provide universal insights into the human condition in an artistic manner, whose aesthetic appeal often lies in its indeterminacy. Sometimes, literary works implicitly carry political messages or have polemical undertones, but their preserve is essentially aesthetic. If

the work is more polemical, then it runs the danger of becoming a political narrative.

A political narrative has a specific purpose in driving the target audience to a particular way of thinking or course of action. It exploits human emotions and sentiments and tries to evoke an emotive human and universal appeal even for a radical and extremist outlook. Unlike a work of pure fiction, it is more strident in its overtly moral outlook and judgement of people, places, circumstances and values. It often provides a lengthy diagnosis of the ills afflicting socio-political life and also provides so-called definitive solutions for getting rid of the problem.

More important, one story or many stories become part of a grand political narrative that speaks of socio-political ills and injustices, calls for action for the solution of a problem, but does not usually discuss solutions at much as the criticism of the problems. Most radical ideologues, like Maududi and Sayyid Qutb, strongly argue against the socio-economic ills of their times, but their intellectual rigour is conspicuously scant when it comes to discussing their proposed utopian solutions of an Islamic polity.

To Jahn Hagel, Chairman of Deloitte, political narratives still have stronger influence than literary stories. He avers that stories "have limited power because of their closed-ended nature. They have a beginning, middle and end. Once a story resolves, it is more or less over. It is also more about the people in the story than about the listener".[22]

On the other hand, the political narrative is more persuasive. This is for two reasons. First, the political narrative is open-ended and does not have a resolution, which allows listeners to play a role in the outcome. "There is something that is in the process of unfolding. The end is yet to be determined. And … there is an invitation for all of us to participate in that narrative, to help determine what the outcome is going to be".[23]

Unlike a literary plot, which is supposed to have an interesting beginning, a taut middle and an impactful and conclusive end, political narratives focus more on the beginning of the narrative that focuses on the ills and injustices, the evil machinations of political

rivals, etc. and provide a compelling diagnosis of the problem. The interest is sustained in the middle through interesting substantiation of the original premise with several sub-narratives and affiliate stories.

However, unlike literary fiction where the suspense and climax of a story is very important in providing a convincing and satisfactory end that ties up all the rational and emotional loose ends, political narratives use obfuscation by remaining vague, idealistic and, at times, open ended when it comes to providing their solutions for their stated problem as conclusion to their narratives.

The empty spaces of the latter half of the narration dealing with effective solutions of even the most successful political narratives remain conveniently vague and fanciful and are filled in by a receptive audience as an act of faith.

One of the major tools that political narratives employ as part of their strategic communication is the use of dubious propaganda techniques, which have evolved over many millennia of human history.

The 'Meta-Narrative'

In most simple terms, the term 'meta-narrative' refers to the comprehensive idea that lies behind a narrative. It can be described as the narrative of all the narratives of history, through the anticipated completion of a master idea. In this regard, philosophies and mythologies explaining the causes behind the events of history and even anticipating the culmination of events in the future on the basis of their core beliefs and values are known as meta-narratives. Thus, meta-narratives present themselves as theories of all things like Marxism, Fascism and even modern Islamism.

The term 'meta-narrative' is made up of two words, one is the Greek word 'meta' (which means 'beyond'), while the other is 'narrative'. The term was brought into prominence by the post-modernist thinker Jean-Francois Lyotard in 1979, when he stated in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (French: *La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport Sur Le Savoir*) that the notion of knowledge in post-modern society was characterised

by a mistrust of 'grand narratives' or 'meta-narratives', which were the quintessential features of modernity, such as the grand narratives of progress, emancipation, Fascism and Marxism.

Curiously, radical ideological literature are highly critical of post-modernist thought and dabble excessively in building highly idealised societies based on the meta-narratives of their philosophies, such as Fascism, Maoism, Islamism, etc. Therefore, the literature of most terrorist organisations, though replete with smaller ideological constructs and narrative strands loosely combine into a comprehensive construct of their core beliefs known as the 'meta-narrative'.

Even as post modern philosophers of our times tend to look down upon meta-narratives as artificial ideological constructs of modern and pre-modern minds, radical revisionist and atavistic movements are busy recalibrating their trite and discarded meta-narratives for post-modern generations, struggling to somehow ground them in 21st century realities.

The Narrative Tree

Although political narratives do not include some of the key features of fictional narrative, such as the narrative arch, the character arch, or the conventional Freytag's pyramid of the plot—consisting of five parts: exposition (originally called introduction), rising action (rise), climax, falling action (return or fall), and dénouement/resolution/revelation/catastrophe—it has some of its own special features.

Most revolutionary political ideologies and their narratives can be likened to the shape of a tree. The trunk constitutes the core narrative,[24] which stands for the key political or strategic aim or idea. For example, in the case of modern jihadist movements, this idea could be "establishment of global caliphate by pursuing asymmetric warfare against the present international order".

As can be gauged from this narrative aim, there are many component concepts attached to this trunk. In the case of the Salafi jihadist narrative tree, there could be narrative branches and offshoots justifying permanent state of war until 'hakimiyyat Allah' (rule of God) is achieved, justification of 'tawahhush' (indiscriminate use

of violence to instill fear in the hearts of people and governments), and replacement of humanist values with the Salafi jihadist concept of 'al wala wal bara' (a distorted understanding of deeds that God approves and disapproves). Another subset of the jihadist narrative tree could be narratives justifying regional conflicts around the world involving Muslims—such as in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. At the root will lie a religious ideology that gives precence to God's 'injunctions' above modern humanist values.

Propaganda and Public Relations

The word propaganda these days signifies a kind of message that is biased and misleading in nature and is aimed at supporting a particular political outlook or viewpoint. However, the word 'propaganda' initially did not bear a negative connotation. In Latin, it means 'to propagate' or 'to sow'. The word initially came to be applied to any institution or scheme for propagating a doctrine or system. It is only when Nazi Germany abused the word by employing devious psychological tactics to manipulate perceptions of the public during World War II that the word itself became infamous.

In fact, the 'inventor' of public relations and nephew of the great psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, Edward Bernays in his book *Propaganda: The Public Mind in the Making* (published in 1928), sought to restore the concept of propaganda in the West through by coining 'public relations' as a substitute term.

He writes: "The new profession of public relations has grown up because of the increasing complexity of modern life … Governments, whether they are monarchical, constitutional, democratic or communist, depend upon acquiescent public opinion for the success of their efforts and, in fact, government is only government by virtue of public acquiescence. Industries, public utilities, educational movements, indeed all groups representing any concept or product, whether they are majority or minority ideas, succeed only because of approving public opinion. Public opinion is the unacknowledged partner in all broad efforts."[25]

With the emergence of professional principles of journalism based on the avowed precepts of fairness and non-partisanship, in

pursuance of helping the citizens make up their own mind about a political issue, the idea of propaganda has become questionable although terms like 'perception management' remain in vogue.

In fact, the alternative lexicon also includes words as marketing, advertising and promotional activities which fall under the ambit of the more acceptable term 'public relations'. The word 'spin' came into currency during the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the term 'spin doctors' was used for press secretaries and public relations officers intent on giving a favourable view of the government, but these terms have also become infamous.

Although the term 'propaganda' is infamous today, there is perhaps no other time that its techniques are being employed by political parties, advertising and marketing companies and radical groups to influence public perception than in our times. Neil Postman once wrote that of all the words, 'propaganda' is the most mischievous.[26] According to Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, "Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist".[27]

Curiously, religious groups have also been good propagandists as they sell abstract and mythological beliefs to people. Therefore, it is not surprising that modern-day jihadist groups are adept at using propaganda techniques to influence impressionable young minds in their discourses on social media, internet websites, educational and religious forums.

Before going through the propaganda themes and techniques used by jihadist organisations, it would be important to briefly explore some of the popularly known techniques of propaganda.

Propaganda: White, Gray and Black

It is said that propaganda itself comes in various forms, based on its aims, target audience, and mediums of dissemination. Sometimes, propaganda is said to be 'agitative' in that it attempts to provoke an audience into taking action. On other occasions, it is said to be 'integrative' in that it tries to calm down a restive audience, intending to make it passive, accepting and non-challenging.[28]

Modern propaganda is classified as white, gray or black according to the extent to which the messaging conceals or exposes the truth.[29] White propaganda provides correct and verified information, but is presented in a manner to convince the audience that its sender is a righteous source with the right ideas and the political ideology. In the words of Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, "White propaganda attempts to build credibility with the audience, for this could have usefulness at some point in the future".[30]

Gray propaganda is not attributed to any sponsor and conceals the real source of the propaganda. According to Bates and Clayton, "The objective of gray propaganda is to promote viewpoints that are in the interest of the originator but that would be more acceptable to target audiences than official statements".[31] Thus, grey propaganda is between black and white propaganda, as its author may not be identified and the veracity of the information cannot be substantiated. Rumour, when spread deliberately, is a powerful example of grey propaganda.

Black propaganda is completely false, subversive and provocative. It falsely attributes the origin of its message to its adversary in order to damage their prestige, undermine their credibility, or get it to take actions that it might not otherwise pursue. In the words of Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, 'black propaganda is when the source is concealed or credited to a false authority and spreads lies, fabrications, and deceptions. Black propaganda is the 'big lie', including all types of creative deceit.'[32] The best example of black propaganda in history is that of Hitler's propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, who claimed that outrageous claims are better received than mildly distorted statements, a technique called the 'Big Lie'.

Notable Propaganda Techniques	Explanation
Name Calling/Smearing	When a derisive title is attached to a person to dismiss his/her argument outright—such as flip-flopper, yuppie, redneck, wimp, commie, tree hugger (used for environmentalist), etc.
Bandwagon	Persuading people to do a certain thing because everybody is doing it.

Testimonial and Transfer	Making a respected and reputed person endorse an idea is testimonial. Associating a political idea with an unpopular person is done to discredit it, called transfer.
Ad hominem	Attacking a person as opposed to attacking his or her argument.
Common folk	Shows narrator is from among common people, uses common sense and understands common folk.
Ad nauseam (Constant repetition)	To repeat an idea or slogan so many times that it becomes popular.
Glittering generalities	Use of emotionally appealing adjectives that create a good feeling about a political person or ideology but are not based on reality, such as golden age, enlightened leadership, etc.
Obfuscation	Indulging in vague generalities so that the audience supplies its own interpretations.
Red herring	Giving many facts without establishing their relevance to the argument.
Scapegoating	Blaming a few persons, a community or nation for all the problems afflicting a person or a community.
Slogan	Using a catchy phrase that oversimplifies and stereotypes the opponent, without defeating argument.
Strawman	To refute a deliberately misinterpreted view of the opponent's argument and claim victory.
Whataboutism	Without addressing a charge in an argument, pointing to similar purported failings of the other side. Old Soviet government pointed US failings to deflect criticism against it.
Assertion	The enthusiastic advertisement of a fact that is not necessarily true but is presented as truth without substantiation.

Glittering Generalities	Appealing to the emotions of a target audience through reference to universally pleasing concepts. It refers to vague words or a phrase used to evoke positive feelings rather than to convey information.
Card Stacking	Selectively presenting arguments and evidence that only validates one side of a complex and contested issue.
Testimonial	Hire a famous person or celebrity to validate or endorse a political position or support a product.
Simplification	This is a technique in which the many facts of a situation are reduced so the right or wrong, good or evil, of an act or decision appear more plain or obvious than they actually are.
Attitude Transfer	Transfer good feelings, ideas, looks or fashionable clothing to the person for whom the message is intended.
Sloganeering	A catchword or a phrase loaded with emotion but mostly bereft of logic, at times even set to a melody that makes it easy to remember to build and popularise public perception in favour or against an individual, political party, product or matter of policy.
Stereotyping	The promotion of a belief that individuals, groups or parties have certain inherited qualities simply because they belong to a certain racial, ethnic or cultural group. Thus, stereotypes seek to obfuscate individual merit or shortcomings and create perceptions based on prejudice and discrimination.

Source: Robert Cole, ed. (1998). *Encyclopedia of Propaganda*. Armonk, NY: Sharpe Reference.

The knowledge of these and other propaganda techniques help us decode and deconstruct radical messaging to develop effective counter-narratives.

Narrative Persuasion and Transportation

Radical narratives have great efficacy in seducing impressionable young minds to their cause. In order to understand the reason for the resonance and appeal of their message narrative persuasion theories, such as narrative transportation, need to be understood.

According to the narrative transportation theory, impressionable minds tend to lose themselves in a story, to the extent that their attitudes and intentions inadvertently change in line with the argument of a narration. According to R.J. Gerrig,[33] who first coined the term 'narrative transportation' within the context of novels, people suspend disbelief while reading a story. In their state of detachment from reality they mentally transport themselves to a narrative world and start living in the make-belief. Emotionally evocative and intense literature, developed by most radical ideologues to win recruits, has the ability to cause moral dissonance and confusion in impressionable minds even after they return to the realm of everyday reality.

By employing literary techniques of transportation, parasocial interaction, identification and hero worship, impressionable minds enter the fantastic world of narratives out of fondness for the stories. Through carefully crafted identification and myth-making techniques, they become credulous victims of narrative persuasion and start rooting for characters for plainly emotional reasons.

According to Emily Moyer Guse and Katherine Dale, media-based narratives "foster a unique type of involvement that is characterized by getting swept up into a story-world and engaging with the characters therein. This narrative engagement can increase one's susceptibility to persuasive messages by reducing various forms of resistance to persuasion."[34]

This narrative persuasion in the formative years of a young audience could heavily influence their mind's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. Therefore, it is not surprising that radical terror groups invest a lot in creating myths of exceptionalism, revolution, sacrifice and heroism that attract young minds to their cause.

There is a view that the plethora of fake news, conspiracy theories and fantastical narratives on social media has weakened the

younger generations' grip on reality. According to William J. Brown, the development of fiction in the form of literary novels, cinema and the visual medium in the last half a century has "made mediated personalities, both real people and fictional characters, powerful agents of social change".[35]

Indirect methods of persuasion, which indoctrinate ideas by delivering them through the subtext of provocative words, music or images find less resistance from audiences, which being more focused on getting entertained suspend critical judgement, while reading or viewing visceral scenes of violence and hate. Therefore, the study of persuasion theories is important for not only deconstructing the machinations and appeal of radical narratives, but also important for developing effective counter-narratives.

Idea Framing

In political narratives, idea framing is a common technique used by political parties for instilling concepts and perspectives into the minds of people, in order to shape their opinions and perspectives in line with the agenda of the party.

To E. Goffman,[36] framing in social theory refers to a "schema of interpretation, a collection of anecdotes or stereotypes, which audiences subconsciously rely on to understand and respond to events".

These techniques of idea framing and metaphorical referencing is being currently exploited by crafty narrators of radical ideologies to an exceptional degree. For example, militant Islamists have popularised idioms derived from religious mythology and history—such as 'Great Satan' for the United States and the international campaign against violent extremism as 'crusading wars'.

The effect of such incendiary and emotive phraseology is pernicious because of both its cultural or religious connotation and its intent to offend. The use of idea framing is done to evoke 'cultural resonance' that inveigles the consciousness of even the most rational and moderate members of a community for a long time. The use of offensive words, images, phrases, and metaphors drawn from religious and cultural references form a major constituent of political and radical narratives.

Branding

The modern day narrator is not akin to the novelist, short story writer or speechwriter but is similar to the film director, who need not just communicate the core idea but package it as a specialised 'message' that is carefully calibrated to evoke the desired level of resonance and response from the target audience. Herein comes the concept of 'branding' that is used in advertising, wherein the name and the image of a product subliminally communicates its ideals, values and goals. Marshall McLuhan puts the process more succinctly when he says that "the medium is itself the message".[37]

In the context of producing counter-narratives, the importance of including indigenous artifacts that resonate with members of a community targeted for receiving the message cannot be over-emphasized. These may include elements of a particular community's traditional mores and ethos, including artforms such as oral histories, songs and dance that have unique symbolism, and are derived from traditional myths and legends as well as literary and linguistic conventions.

The ISIS projected itself as a seed Caliphate, the one prophesized to usher in the rise of the 'Mahdi' (the rightly guided Islamic ruler) around doomsday, whose legions would bear black flags (as mentioned in Islamic eschatology) that had the original mark of the Prophet's seal. This representation is meant to strengthen the narrative of the organisation as being the prophesized Caliphate radical zealots have been waiting for.

This use of black flags, appropriation of Prophet's seal on the flag, the singing of Nasheed (religious songs accompanied with devotional music) on videos, etc., turned ISIS into the most powerful brand of jihadism that no other group of the kind could develop before it. Thus, the branding of ISIS communicates a narrative of its self-styled role through its imagery and symbolism.

Hence, the construction of a narrative is not limited to the 'logos' (or the effectiveness of the argument one espouses). It also becomes effective with branding techniques that places the narrative in the context of the cultural 'ethos' and evokes resonance through nostalgia and empathy (the latter word derived from 'pathos').

Branding also involves the use of archetypes that Carl Jung considered 'inborn tendencies that play a role in influencing human behaviour' and highly developed elements of the collective unconscious.[38] The famous Jungian archetypes, such as the persona, the anima and animus, the shadow, the father figure, the mother, the hero, the wise old man and the trickster, etc. are part of the collective unconscious that adept narrators employ to make evocative storylines and narratives in their political discourse.

There are several outlets for disseminating narratives available to government agencies as well as radical outfits to disseminate narratives or counter-narratives in the public domain. These include social forums, religious seminaries, youth clubs, prisons, print media, movies, radio, television, internet and social media, government channels, through rumours, etc.

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4.　Common Themes of Radical Ideologies

> Terrorism is the tactic of demanding the impossible and demanding it at gunpoint.
>
> —Christopher Hitchens[1]

In a democratic society, it is commonplace for political narratives of opposition parties to be critical of the government's policies and decision-making, but extremist and radical narratives are generally opposed to the very system of governance in a country or a region and espouse violent revolutionary overthrow or at least an insurrection against institutions of the state itself.

Almost all radical narratives have an overriding political agenda, which is often camouflaged behind a philosophical or theological facade. It is possible that a terrorist group or movement might arise out of ideological or religious causes, but there is often an underlying political aim, which despite being uncompromising may not be fully revealed to the public or even the group's own rank and file in the initial stages. Smaller groups may have several disparate narrative strands as well as vaguely inter-related grievances and ideals, but over time they all add up into a master narrative, which is fully articulated and revealed in the more mature phases of the movement. It is possible that the overarching narrative design of a radical movement exists from the very beginning of its formation, even before the smaller narrative strands have been fully formed, but it is also possible for the master narrative to be developed over time. In any case, the primordial demon of the idea is rarely fully

exposed in the initial stages, often to avoid its immediate rejection from prospective followers. For example, it took many years for the global jihadist movement to declare the end state for the movement lies in the establishment of a global Caliphate. In the initial phase, the impression is given that the higher leadership has the cause and the grand strategic design fully sorted, even if it has been kept secret for sundry, weighty reasons. In fact, the focus of a radical narrative is primarily on the monstrosity of 'The Other', even as the vagueness of the cause and the shadowy image of the benefic revolutionary leader gleams in hallowed light.

As the grand narrative evolves and refines itself over a period of time, it carefully picks up and sequences narrations of particular events and concepts suitable for the promotion of its cause, its methodology and goals. It is at the culmination of the meticulously arranged narrative strands that the grand strategic design is unveiled and expostulated as the only viable and justifiable means for settling long-held grievances. It is now that all stories, concepts and ideals in the terror group's narrative, even if they might appear separate and at times disjointed from each other, begin to make sense as they fall in line with the construct of a carefully calibrated master narrative or the so-called 'Meta-Narrative'. In the words of Jeffrey R Halverson, H.L. Goodall Junior and Steven R. Corman, "A narrative is not a single story but a collection of stories, and a collection is systematic because the stories are components that relate to one another with coherent themes, forming a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts".[2]

Thus, the grand construct of the so-called jihadist master narrative is built on certain key conceptual strands. For example, the Salafi jihadist distortion that militant jihad is an obligatory duty ('fard al ayn') for all Muslim males at all times and not the contingent duty (fard kifayah) in canonical texts—that makes militant jihad an incumbent duty only for the military when a Muslim head of state declares war—is a distortion made by Salafi jihadist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS in Islamic law to validate their transnational terrorism (which is proscribed in canonical texts of all sects and schools of Islamic jurisprudence). Without this perverse distortion

of the meaning of jihad, the strategy of asymmetric warfare by the jihadist groups could not be achieved.

Many distortions in the methodology of jihad are unique to groups like ISIS when they violate canonical law in the name of 'ijtihaad' (independent legal reasoning) and legitimise 'tawahhush' (acts of barbarity) and 'takfeer' (the act of declaring people apostate or non-believers) to then make them liable for slaughter. In fact, the entire edifice of the Salafi-jihadist warfare is built on the distortion of the meaning of jihad as enshrined in classical works of jurisprudence, introduced with the purpose of legitimising barbarity on the grounds of reinstating the Caliphate.

Radical Narratives: Dynamics of Resonance

Scholars like Angela Trethewey and Steven R. Corman emphasize the centrality of ideology in the radical narration and believe that some radicalised minds can be reclaimed through proper use of deralicalising communication.[3] According to them, radical ideology has four functions:

Naturalizing: The first function of the radical narrative termed by these scholars is 'Naturalising', which refers to the work of radical ideologues to turn socially constructed, politically-motivated, and fluid ideas into strong and indisputable assumptions, beliefs, and meanings.

In this regard, the scholars cite the work of the modern Islamist ideologue Syed Qutb's narrative in his book *Milestones Along the Way*. In the book, Qutb develops a theory for his Muslim readers that after the period of the 'jahiliyya' (an age of ignorance, polytheism, and barbarism that preceded the coming of Islam), Prophet Muhammad brought enlightenment and guidance to the world.

However, after the passing away of the Prophet, Qutb argues that there has been steady decline in Islamic political and social ascendance, which the radical Islamist ideologue asserts is mainly the outcome of the efforts made by 'enemies of Islam'. He claims, this has created a new culture that is similar to what existed before the coming of the Prophet — a 'new jahiliyya' (new period of ignorance).

In order to correct the situation, Qutb avers it is necessary to revert to the heydays of early Islam. Thus, Qutb's evocation of the phrase 'new jahiliyya' provides an ideological excuse for disoriented youth to carry out violent action.

In this exposition, "Qutb's narrative naturalizes several assumptions that are key to extremist ideology". By writing in an emotive rather than a logical manner, the narrative introduces unsubstantiated assumptions. Some of these assumptions are that the worldwide Muslim community is in a state of continuing decline, that this change has happened because of the non-Muslim 'Other' working against it, that this assumed state of regression displeases God, and that it is the duty of Muslims to restore the situation to pristine times, when the Prophet was ruling Arabia. This ideological construct 'naturalises' a lot of assumptions as indisputable facts and the coining of a catchphrase 'new jahiliyya' has an evocative appeal that overwhelms reason and inflames any simmering discontent in public perception against the existing political order.

Obfuscation: In addition to 'naturalising', Angela Trethewey and Steven R. Corman point out that ideology constructs a narrative that 'obscures' the internal contradictions in "an ongoing system of meaning, making them seem to be seamless, coherent and unified worldviews". A prime example is the way radical ideologues hide jurisprudential differences in interpretation of Islamic law on a variety of issues and their advocacy of hitherto prohibited forms of conduct as legitimate acts of religion.

Thus, the radical cleric Yusuf Al-Qaradawi makes the outrageous claim:

> The Muslim clerics, or most of them, have agreed that it is permissible to kill Muslims if the army that attacks the Muslims hides behind them, that is, uses them as barricades or human shields, and sets them at the front so that the fire, arrows, or spears of the Muslims will harm them first. The clerics have permitted the defenders to kill these innocent Muslims, who were forced to stand at the head of the army of their enemies … Otherwise the invading army will enter and annihilate their offspring and their harvests. There was no choice but to sacrifice some [of the Muslims] in

order to defend the entire [Muslim] community … Therefore, if it is permitted to kill innocent Muslims who are under coercion in order to protect the greater Muslim community, it is all the more so permissible to kill non-Muslims in order to liberate the land of the Muslims from its occupiers and oppressors.[4]

It is noteworthy that this radical ideologue does not provide name any Muslim cleric in the abstract above, while making his outrageous claims.

Universalising: The third role of ideology lies in playing the dubious role of 'universalising'.[5] Ideologies are said to enable elites to maintain their power by making their agenda appear to their group members as if their plans are in the latter's best interest. Thus, terrorist leaders are able to convince through ideology their group members to make sacrifices for the good of the group, although actiond of the rank and file solely benefit the group's elite.

Thus, members of terrorist groups believe their sacrifices would result in them attaining spiritual benefits, such as gaining paradise on becoming a martyr. According to Jessica Stern, "After a prospective *shaheed* (martyr) is recruited, he will be referred to as a 'living martyr'. In the last days before the operation, he writes letters to family and friends, explaining his decision and his expectation of paradise."[6] Thus, the ideology frames martyrdom as an act that helps the community and the individual martyr, while keeping leaders of violent groups out of the picture.

Strucuring: The fourth function of radical ideology is 'structuring'. This refers to creating rules and resources in an organisation (or broader system) that preserve the ideology. Thus, ideology becomes embedded in routine talk and actions performed daily. Ideological control is subtle and indirect, but highly effective. Ideology works most effectively when the world view articulated by the ruling elite becomes part of the talk and actions of the people.

Themes Common to Most Radical Narratives

On closer study of narratives churned out by radical ideologies, one finds great similarity in the themes and methods employed to

evoke extremist sentiment in the target audience, irrespective of the diversity of their political, religious or ideological affiliation. Some of the typical thematic strands of radical ideologies are listed below so that suitably effective counter-narratives are developed to deconstruct, delegitimise, debunk and demystify them.

- *The Assertion of Exclusivist, Collective Identity:* Violent extremist literature often harps on the need for reclaiming national, racial or religious pride, which it claims is lost in a disenfranchised, liberal and highly urbanised world.

These narratives try to underscore the importance of their community's distinctive identity, which they almost invariably claim to be facing an existential threat, after its pristine sanctity is said to have been violated by foreign cultures, particularly by forces of modern liberalism. In the words of Mark Freestone, 'modernity and globalisation have brought additional challenges to our personalities, and particularly to the coherent sense of community and identity.'[7]

When it comes to Muslim extremist groups, their narratives play upon the so-called confusion of national identity vis-à-vis religious identity among Muslims in the modern world.[8] These groups target Muslim populations struggling with their affiliations with a national identity such as the second and third generation of Muslims—Turks in Germany, Algerians in France and British Muslims of Pakistani origin in the UK—who still struggle to integrate themselves in mainstream European society.

In the words of noted British Islamic scholar Shiraz Maher, "The common thread that links the Bradford sisters, Talha Asmal and Thomas Evans (all of them left Britain to join ISIS and other jihadist groups) is a search for belonging. The answer is to build a value system everyone can buy into."[9] In their bid to revive a perceived loss of personal and communal identity in the modern world, many Muslim political movements have sought separate nationhood, such as the ISIS or the Taliban.

Thus, violent extremist organisations call for creating collectivist, ideologically homogenous authoritarian states, where they claim the pristine purity of every citizen's religious and/or ethnic identity

would be safeguarded and respected, which in turn will restore the pride and character of the aggrieved community. This message resonates among most radicals—be it White supremacist groups or Muslim terror organisations.

- *Rhetoric of 'exceptionalism':* A key theme common to all radical and extremist narratives is the belief in superiority and a sense of 'exceptionalism' in the indigenous race, ethnicity, ideology or religion over other races, nationalities, ideologies and religions. Exceptionalism is the perception or belief that a country, society, institution, religion, socio-political movement, or even a particular phase of time is 'exceptional, superior and extraordinary to all others. Most violent extremists claim that their culture is inherently unique and superior to all of their perceived adversaries, which emerges from the superiority of their race, ethnicity, nationality, ideology or religious persuasion. The theme of exceptionalism is evident in the right-wing literature of Fascism in early 20th century Europe, as well as among modern-day Muslim extremists who believe Islam, and that to their sect/school of Islam is superior to all other ideologies in the world.

- *Manichean binary of absolute good and evil:* All extremist narratives have a tendency to see the world in terms of absolute good and evil and leave no room for differing or nuanced views, let alone a middle ground.[10] All judgements of right and wrong inexorably fall in accordance with the community's own vested interests. Their slogan of 'with us or against us', calls for complete loyalty. Thus, one finds Osama bin Laden issuing this statement after the September 11 attacks: "I tell them that these events have divided the world into two camps, the camp of the faithful and the camp of infidels. May God shield us and you from them."[11]

- *Historical Revisionism:* In the famous novel *Nineteen Eighty Four*, George Orwell (1903-1950) scripted a very telling axiom of radical political thought, when he stated: 'He who controls the present, controls the past. He who controls the past, controls the future.'[12] To most extremist groups, there is no objectivity about history and it is the dubious preserve of the hegemon. Therefore,

most extremist ideologues believe in altering historical facts and in presenting favourable descriptions of their community's past heroes, battles and accomplishments.

- *Generation of Conspiracy Theories:* The propensity to find something sinister behind events (particularly those that challenge the extremist historical narrative) necessitates the generation of bizarre conspiracy theories in the ideological literature of radical groups. J.M. Bale defines conspiracy theories as explanatory beliefs about a group of actors that collude in secret to reach malevolent goals.[13] To justify the cultural ascendance and moral superiority of a group or community over 'other' communities, conspiracies theories are circulated to explain past failures, defeats and downfall of the aggrieved community. Thus, a culture of conspiracy theories, 'truthisms' and lies pervades extremist texts.

  For example, the Taliban spread the conspiracy theory that Osama bin Laden was not involved in the 9/11 terror attacks. Similarly, right-wing extremist groups in the US to this day argue that former US President Barrack Obama, was illegally made president as he was not born in the US but in Kenya.

- *Persecution Complex:* The narratives of most violent extremist organisations is filled with the most exaggerated accounts of real or perceived persecution carried out by the enemies of their community. There is a tendency to bewail and remember a historical wrong for ages in order to keep the flame of collective anger burning.

  There is also another kind of persecution complex, which puts the blame of all of the community's real and perceived shortcomings and failures on the door of other communities or moderate members of the indigenous community.

- *Disrespect for values of Liberalism and Humanism:* Almost all extremist narratives oppose values of humanism and liberalism as well as universal freedoms and equality of Man. Literature produced by violent extremist groups rarely show compassion or sympathy to the condition of fellow human beings from other communities without a hint of sarcasm or derision.

Most terrorist organisations, particularly Al-Qaeda and ISIS, oppose all modern ideals of democracy, socialism, capitalism, etc. There are several passages in Al-Qaeda and ISIS literature that openly discredit and vilify not only powerful countries that oppose them, but even all international organisations, like the United Nations. In fact, in one of his speeches in 2001, Bin Laden declared that all Arab leaders who turn to the UN for adjudication on any issue were 'infidels'.[14]

- *'Othering', Demonisation, Dehumanisation:* Short of reason, extremist discorses are replete with messages of hate and aim at polarising society. There is an uncompromising distinction between the in-group (us) vis-à-vis the out-group ('them', 'they' or 'Other').

  According to Lorenzo-Dus, and S. Macdonald, 'Othering' designates a discursive process whereby individuals or social groups are represented so as to render them both as radically different to the individuals or social groups doing the Othering (the in-group) and as deviant/distant—i.e., as "incompatible strangers" (Baumann, 1991, 66).'[15] In these narratives, the hypocrite, traitor and collaborator are described as more reprehensible and face a more gruesome punishment than the adversary itself. For example, ISIS burnt a Jordanian pilot alive because he was judged by them as a Muslim collaborating with Western powers. In fact, he was given a more gruesome death by ISIS than its beheading of Western captives.

- *The Broad Brush:* Extremists paint their opposition with a broad black brush without trying to spare anybody even sympathetic to their avowed cause. The entire world other than the group or party following an extremist agenda is summarily dismissed as savage, uncivilised and savage and is blamed for hatching a conspiracy against the extremist community.

- *Emphasis on Vigilance against Suspects:* There is often a constant refrain in most narratives of extremism on the need for being extra alert, suspicious and wary of the enemy's machinations and plots. This builds a climate of fear and distrust in the community affected with radicalism, which often overpowers voices of reason, tolerance and compromise within it.

Extremist narratives do not merely talk about the supposed machination of enemy communities, but also of traitors and suspected collaborators from within the community. People of rival terrorist groups and breakaway factions are also vilified as hypocrites or foreign agents.

Thus, the ISIS calls a whole host of reputed Islamic scholars that speak of moderation (such as Yasir Qadhi, Yusuf Hamza, etc.) as 'murtad' (which can be translated as renegade).

- *Glorification of Violence:* In general, extremists glorify war over peace, acts of violence over the need for social harmony, tolerance and co-existence, which they vilify as dishonorable, cowardly and punishable offences.

    As a war-monger, ISIS holds the view that Islam (which literally means peace) is a religion of war and that being in a perpetual state of war is essential to faith. The cornerstone of its grand-narrative is to launch an Armageddon against the Western world, which it still believes is waging a crusade against Islam and that there can be no peace until a global Caliphate is established.

    Thus, there seems to be an underlying propensity towards violence for its own sake and an extreme self-righteousness in all of ISIS' violence that refuses to reflect and question its own barbarity and bloodlust.

- *Validation of Ideology Even from Adversarial Sources:* Suffering from inherent low self-esteem, most extremists hold a great deal of hidden admiration for their opponents and adversaries and often seek respect and validation from people they hate and target. For example, radical Islamist literature often cite non-Islamic, Western sources praising their religion, history, culture, sciences and leadership. In a way, they seek acknowledgement from the very source they strive to discredit and delegitimise.

- *Exclusive Claim over Ideological Purity:* Extremist narratives devote a lot of time and energy into burnishing their ideological, nationalistic or religious credentials of their respective terror groups. They tend to highlight the fact that they are purists and claim to be the sole custodians of the original faith or race they

belong to, unlike their rivals, who are vilified as false claimants or secret collaborators of the so-called 'enemy'. They also claim that their belief system (be it nationalist, racist or religious) is the most exalted and that there can be no other valid interpretation or understanding of the source ideology or religion, except theirs.

Thus, it is extremely important to debunk the ideological/ religious authenticity of these such pernicious ideologies. In this respect, the association of modern jihadist groups with the now defunct 'khawarij' community has proven to be an effective ploy used by religious experts of counter-narratives, such as by Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, Shaikh Tahir-ul-Qadri and others.

- *Smug Certainty of Swift, Decisive Victory:* Terrorist groups like ISIS often praise their leadership and warfare methodology and promise their fighters swift and conclusive victory. The ISIS even launched a campaign in late 2014, claiming that it would achieve its goal of Global Caliphate by 2020. Creating counter-narratives that expose flaws in the effectiveness in their mode of warfare and creating doubts on the feasibility of their scheduled victory plans proves useful in stopping prospective recruits from joining the futile cause.

- *Glorification of 'Liberation, Governance':* Terrorist groups that gain control of some territory, like the ISIS in Iraq and Syria, often build up narratives about the extreme effectiveness of their system and style of governance. Such narratives attract young recruits to their cause, who are told that the system introduced by terrorist groups in areas under their control is Elysian and bereft of ills of mismanagement and corruption, unlike what is seen in areas under the jurisdiction of nation-states. The veracity of such claims of governance should be debunked by the media by exposing flaws in public administration, heavy handedness and injustice, as well as corruption at the leadership and lower levels of administration.

- *Promotion of the Idea of Political Model and End State:* Most extremist organisations present socio-political models for their community, and sometimes to the world as an alternative to the

present international order and system. A lot of revolutionary literature in the defence of this alternate and untested model is projected as the best solution for overcoming all the problems the community or the world is currently facing or may face even in the future. There needs to be a careful study of these often half-baked, flawed socio-political systems. A body of literature needs to be developed to debunk this model of society and governance by conducting a deep study of the changes proposed.

Generally, most socio-political experts do not engage in the exercise of discrediting pseudo-political treatises of the extremist kind, believing them to be too facile and self-evidently ridiculous. However, the time has come to understand the danger in letting this literature be consumed by impressionable young minds, without having alternative texts developed to discredit and debunk some of the fantastical theories and assertions made in the literature of these radical organisations.

- *Glorification of Leadership:* The typical extremist literature is often replete with panegyrics about the leadership of a group, which is glorified as embodying honesty, bravery, wisdom and often even ideological credentials and a glorious descent. Thus, ISIS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi was projected by the terror group as an Islamic scholar and descendant from the family of the Prophet. Counter-narratives may be developed to criticise, vilify, discredit, and satirise such a leadership so that the halo created around such criminals should be removed from those beholden to extremist and terrorist personalities.

- *Vilification of Rival Ideology, Methodology:* Extremist literature often seeks to attack liberal values, such as democracy, pluralism, individual liberties, rights of women and the modern international system. Terrorist groups often brag and publish propaganda literature against the failure of the international community to defeat them.

There is also a lot of competition amongst terrorist groups fighting for the same cause. Thus, ISIS is known to criticise and discredit Al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups, both on issues of ideology and methodology. There is also a lot of ridicule and

derision of rival groups over the action and statements of their leaders, as well as the alleged abandonment of their espoused cause.

- *End of World Prophecies and Afterlife:* Many extremist groups depend on purported prophesies in religious literature and reinterpret them to claim their prophetic rise and state in history. The ISIS imagines initiating a purportedly prophesised end-of-the-world Islamic Armageddon by fancifully misinterpreting abstruse Hadeeth texts.

  Extremist movements make the most of the seductive speculation inherent in eschatological literatures. For the Evangelical Christians, the thousand year-long Millennial Kingdom is an inevitable occurence; for certain Muslim sects, it is the prophesized Caliphate of Imam Mahdi and Eisa Maseeh; while for dyed-in-the wool communists, the utopia of a stateless society ushers in the end of history. These fantastical predictions of the future provide useful ideological references for producing fantastic narratives for credulous young minds.

- *Glory of Sacrifice/Martyrdom:* Terrorist narratives in the 19th century, led by Anarchists and Russian revolutionaries, assigned great value to the merits of sacrifice and martyrdom. In the words of Franceso Marone, "By means of the martyrdom narrative punishment lost its terrorising effect for Anarchists, rendering the exercise of power, to some extent, powerless."

  When it comes to Muslim terror groups, the narrative of martyrdom 'Shahadah' is given great credence, but it is generally devoid of the polyvalence of the concept that includes 'Sabr' (patience). Suicide bombings, which have been decried by most Muslim theologians, remain common among most Muslim terrorist groups and have been labeled as 'martyrdom operations' (*al-amaliyyat al-istishhadiyya*) by radical ideologues.

- *Innovations in Ideology/Religion:* Many extremist groups find it difficult to gain ideological and religious legitimacy for their indiscriminate acts of violence. Not finding legitimacy even in original ideological texts or scripture, they unabashedly resort

to making unholy emendations and changes in the strictures and practices of canonical texts or religious traditions.

Curiously, the excuse given is changes in the nature and character of war, which it is said cannot be won by following any ethical codes or rules of engagement. However, this argument is never applied by religious groups when it comes to reforming other trite and impractical interpretations of religious law.

According to Alex P. Schmid, extremist narratives use the following six ways to justify their violent ways to the impressionable minds they want to recruit:

- Identifying a problem as not just a misfortune, but an injustice;
- Constructing a moral justification for violence (religious, ideological, political);
- Blaming the victims of terrorist attacks for their end ('it is their own fault');
- Dehumanising victims through symbols and language ('pigs and apes');
- Displacing responsibility (God or other authorities ordered the individual to commit the act of violence) or diffusing responsibility (the group, not the individual, is responsible);
- Misconstruing or minimising harmful effects (by using euphemisms or by contrasting one's own atrocities with other acts by the enemy which are said to have been much worse).[16]

Narratives for Religious Conversion and Radicalisation

There are several other features typical to extremist narratives of all hues, which are discussed at length in several academic works.

- Aporia (Creation of Uncertainty, Doubt and Confusion): Most votaries of faith generally start by creating a sense of doubt and uncertainty in the mind of the subject. They raise questions about the fundamentals of human experience, such as the health and longevity of life, the purpose of existence, the limits of human knowledge and intelligence, etc. to confuse the human mind with indeterminable questions. This surfeit of doubt and confusion makes a person uncertain about the common beliefs

and conventional notions and makes it ready for an alternate or even radically different ontological, religious and political messages.

- Cognitive Dissonance: The bombardment of doubt and uncertainty in extremist narratives causes a cognitive dissonance in the mind of the receiver who starts questioning everything he or she knows about the world, human values and about onself. Thus, questions are raised over the true identity of the individual, the ethical and cultural values system, the understanding of morality, and with the introduction of guilt and a sense of impurity is introduced, from which the hapless soul struggles to emancipate itself. Once the sense of identity is severely undermined, kindness and forgiveness are practised along with the alternate doctrines and moral code that was supposed to be the intended message all along.

- Higher Purpose: The radical message that is usually a message of discrimination and hate presents a so-called perfect solution for all human ills, with certainty for success and redemption. This message becomes the yardstick for determining the meaning and purpose of life. The convert is supposed to follow this new prescribed path as it gives them a sense of identity, purpose and being part of a larger community.

Three Kinds of Jihadist Narratives in India

There are mainly three kinds of jihadist threats, with their affiliated narratives, which operate in India. The first narrative is that of the so-called Salafi-Jihadist terror groups such as Al-Qaeda, ISIS and Hizbut Tahreer. The second narrative is of Pak-based anti-India groups, like Hizbul Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Muhammad, etc. The third narrative is of homegrown jihadist groups like Indian Mujahideen, SIMI and other groups. These narratives have several things in common but also some noteworthy differences, which relate to the issues and problems they raise to justify their radicalisation, the list of their friends and enemies, their methodology and mode of warfare and their stated aim and solution.

The so-called transnational millenarian jihadists, like Al-Qaeda and ISIS want to start an apocalyptic war with the entire 21st century

international political, social and economic order to establish a Global Caliphate, cross-border terrorist groups may work toward occupying Kashmir as the first step toward defeating India and making it a Muslim ruled nation again, while home-grown jihadist actors (groups or lone-wolves) may be driven to violence out of a communal agenda to perpetrate violence against the country's state institutions. Many of these groups and individuals often collude, collaborate or even merge into one another, but their narratives have essentially different causes, methods and objectives and should be dealt with separately.

Global Jihadist Narrative: Key Concepts

Islam is often described as an iconoclastic religion that prohibits reverence to any kind of iconography. This leads to a predisposition among its followers to focus their attention on 'God's words' as enshrined in the Holy Quran and Prophet's sayings (Hadith). This interpretations of scriptural texts leads to contestations over the meaning and ideological derivatives. Differing interpretations often lead to ideological divisions as tolerance for nuance gives way to assertion of meaning by differing scholars. This tendency toward finding complete and unequivocal certitude of meaning, purpose and injunction has ironically created a large number of contending sects, sub-sects, doctrinal schools and movements within Islam.

The confusion has been exacerbated with the coming of modern ideologies of liberalism, secularism, human rights, democracy, etc. with many religious scholars contesting whether these ideologies are antithetical to the message of Islam or are their values inherent in Islam's teachings. The real challenge came when after the defeat of World War I, the Ottoman Caliphate, which was ruled by the King Abdelmejid II, was abolished in 1924 and the Sunni world was divided into several newly formed nation-states. Thus, the 13 century old political institution of Caliphate came to an abrupt end.

The new Muslim nation states dabbled with modern nationalist, socialist and secular ideals for a few decades, such as Gemal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, Kemal Ataturk in Turkey, Baathist socialist regimes in Syria and Iraq and the secular rule of Shah Reza Pehlavi in Iran. However, Muslim countries were never exposed to modern

democratic institutions for long, and their transition to modern institutions of democracy, human rights, secularism and rule of law could not take root. The rulers of modern Arab states were also not democratic and produced repressive regimes, which allowed extremist groups to rise in opposition and evolve a modern interpretation of jihad to throw away Muslim nation states and a perceived Western hegemony. It was the Salafi jihadist ideologues such as Sayyid Qutb, Mohammad Farag, Abdullah Azzam, Bin Laden and Al-Baghdadi, etc. who evolved an ideological narrative based on certain innovative concepts, which are explained below:

Other Associated Salafi-Jihadist Concepts

- *Jihad:* According to the Salafi-Jihadist narrative, jihad is a state of perpetual holy war, a non-terminating religious duty, for all Muslims to be waged till a global Caliphate is established. This obligation is described as *'fardain'* (religious incumbent). Under this belief system, permission from any imam, parents or other relatives is not required if the jihadist is of an age of understanding. Armed warfare is considered highest form of jihad and is undertaken against all infidels, polytheists and Muslims supporting them.

- *Darul Islam*: The concept of *Darul Islam* or an 'Islamic state' is a constant theme within Al-Qaeda's propaganda. It holds that in order to establish the religion, it is first necessary to establish an Islamic state, which, in turn, will lead to the restitution of the *Caliphate* (Khilafah Islamiyah). It is obligatory for all Muslims to contribute both financially and physically to this end.

- The *Ummah* is the collective community of all Muslims. The rules for the *Ummah* are those of the 'rightful way'. Anyone who follows the 'rightful way' is a member of the chosen community. Anyone who does not believe or follow the rules is a non-believer. Every Muslim must follow the *Ummah*, but if the states in which they live are run by non-believers, Muslims do not have to follow the laws of those states and must migrate to a land (like ISIS territory), where Shariah rule is said to be enforced.

- *Takfir* is the action of accusing others of being infidels or non-believers. This is considered a very serious act. Al-Qaeda, however, has regularly employed the term in an attempt to discredit or disparage other Muslims, who oppose them. By doing so, fellow Muslims have now been turned into enemies.
- *Al Wala' Wal Bara*: Al-Qaeda fosters an atmosphere of 'us versus them' through the use of the term *Al-Wala' Wal Bara*. *Al-Wala* means 'those to whom they are loyal' or simply, 'their friends'. *Al-Bara* refers to 'those whom they hate or their enemies'. This concept becomes a tool to categorise people into friends and enemies. 'Those they hate' are the enemy and 'those they like, or agree with', are friends. The enemies of extremist Muslims are non-Muslims or their Muslim friends and even Muslims considered to be having heretic beliefs.

Global Jihadist's Master Narrative in Brief

The master narrative of global jihadi groups has been condensed here from various sources so that its possible counter-narratives may be discussed in the succeeding chapter. Please remember this narrative presents Salafi-jihadist concepts:

- Islam is faced with a new crusade from the West, this time not in the name of Christianity but in the name of liberalism, secularism, capitalism, democracy, etc.
- Western imperialists have invaded and desecrated Islamic lands—in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, etc.
- They have also installed or bought off Muslim rulers in all Muslim countries that are now Islamic only in name. In fact, no Muslim country is today governed by the Sharia and Muslim rulers of today have become puppets of Western powers, which includes rulers in the land of Islam's holiest shrines.
- This has made 'jihad' (of the asymmetrically violent kind) an essential duty for each and every Muslim individual. Jihadis can wage war in their own individual regions or countries, but should be transnationalist in orientation. They could start with the formation of small Sharia-compliant Islamic statelets in their own regions by bringing down modern nation- states, but their

goal should be the formation of a Global Caliphate, heralding the arrival of the prophecized Mahdi.[17]

- The strategy is to launch a protracted, transnational, asymmetric, at times anarchic and even leaderless war, to infuse a sense of fear and terror in the hearts of the enemy.
- The strategy also involves invalidating or destroying Western concepts and institutions, such as nation-states both in Muslim regions and abroad, the targeting of centres of local national or international trade, finance, telecommunication and transportation and by increasing radicalisation and conversion through traditional and advanced mediums.

Narrative of Pakistan-based Groups

Although, Pakistan-based cross border terrorist groups agree with most of the assertions made by the global jihadists, they essentially tow the official line of the Pakistan establishment, particularly the Pakistan Army, in their narrative of violent extremism which they use to radicalise Indian Muslims, mainly in Jammu and Kashmir.

Groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad may collude and hobnob with some of the worst global jihadist groups like Al-Qaeda at times, but when the ideologies of the latter tend to run contrary to Pakistani Army's diktats, these groups follow the latter.

The first narrative of Pakistan based terrorist groups comes from the famous Two-Nation Theory propounded by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan.

- **Two-Nation Theory:** According to this theory, Muslims and Hindus are two separate nations in their beliefs and customs. Therefore, Muslims should be able to have their own separate homeland. This narrative has been spread by Pakistan and its proxies in Muslim dominated areas of India, particularly in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In the words of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, "Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs and literary traditions. They neither intermarry nor eat together, and indeed they belong to two different civilisations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions".[18]

- **Kashmir is the Jugular vein of Pakistan:** In the words of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan and its acquisition is essential for the state. In addition to the population being majority Muslim, Pakistan says it considers Kashmir its lifeblood because of the river systems that flow from Kashmir into its plains, along with the close cultural affiliation of its peoples.[19] Pakistan also asserts that Kashmir was part of Pakistan's original conception, with the letter 'P' in the country's name standing for Punjab, 'K' for Kashmir, 'S' for Sindh and 'tan' for Balochistan.

    Hindu-Muslim war with Kashmir stepping stone to re-capturing India: According to a study by the New America Foundation, Lashkar-e-Taiba and other Pak-based anti-India jihadi groups believe that after liberating Kashmir, they will launch similar operations to seize control of other parts of India. Thus, Stephen Tanker of the New America Foundation writes about Lashkar-e-Taiba:

    > However, it would be a mistake to suggest the group's leaders viewed this simply as a territorial struggle. Rather, they claimed (with no regard for the historical record) that the Kashmir conflict was the latest chapter in a Hindu-Muslim struggle that has existed ever since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Once Kashmir was liberated, they argued, it would serve as a base of operations to conquer India and restore Muslim rule to the Indian subcontinent.[20]

- **Ghazwa-e-Hind:** There is a 'dhaeef' (verified by Islamic scholars as having weak authenticity) Hadith narration, mentioned in only one of the six collections of '*Sahih Sitta*' (six authentic Hadith collections), which mentions of a prophesized war with India or Ghazwa (meaning war)-e-Hind (meaning 'of India'), purportedly mentioned by the Prophet. The jury is out on whether this Hadith prophesizes an event near the end of times or has it already happened. Nevertheless, the mention of a war against India (Ghazwa-e-Hind) in a less authentic and single Hadith reference has been used by both Pakistan and global jihadist

organisations to legitimise their militant campaign against India and to radicalise the impressionable and Islamically un-informed Muslims of Pakistan and India. Strangely, Al-Qaeda, ISIS and the TTP uses 'Ghazwa-e-Hind' as part of its campaign against Pakistan, as it considers Pakistan as integral to Hind (India) mentioned in the Hadith. The counter-argument to this narrative of Ghawa-e-Hind will be provided in the next chapter.

Master-Narrative of Pak-based Jihadi Groups in Brief

The master narrative of Pak-based jihadi groups has been condensed here from various sources and possible counter-narratives will be discussed in the succeeding chapter. Please remember this narrative presents the adversary's point of view:

- India remains Pakistan's arch enemy and there can be no peace between the two countries as the difference in the ideologies of the two states is based on fundamental religious and cultural differences.[21]
- The dream of the state of Pakistan has still not been fully realised, as Kashmir still remains under India's territorial control.
- The continued occupation of Kashmir by the Indian government necessitates the Islamic conquest of India,[22] as prophesized in the Hadith literature referring to Ghawa-e-Hind.
- To this end, Pak-based jihadist groups should continue attacking India.[23]
- Some anti-India terrorist groups based in Pakistan like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed may collude with global jihadist groups Al-Qaeda and ISIS to this end.[24]
- In one of the pamphlets of LeT entitled 'Why are we waging jihad', the terrorist group states that India, the US and Israel are "existential enemies of Islam". The group considers it the duty of all Muslims that all lands ruled by Muslims in history should be re-conquered. Thus, it is not just anti-India but a pan-Islamist terrorist group. Other groups like Jaish-e-Mohammed share the same outlook.[25]

The Extremist Narrative of the Indian Muslim: With the exception of Muslim insurgents in Jammu and Kashmir and few supporters for Muslim terror groups such as the erstwhile Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and Indian Mujahideen, the Indian Muslim has followed an internal narrative in keeping with the values enshrined in the Indian constitution. Notwithstanding the spasmodic rhetoric of distrust with some political parties during times of communal tension, the community has remained largely committed to the state's overarching ideology of secularism and tolerance.

In the following chapters, information that might prove helpful in developing counter-narratives against the jihadist narratives discussed above have been presented. In spite of the painstaking research conducted, it might be useful to consult major centers of Islamic knowledge in India before building counter-narratives based on the information provided herein.

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5. The Art of Developing Counter-Narratives

The best way to teach people is by telling them a story.

—Kenneth Blanchard[1]

Introduction: Why Counter-Narratives?

As extra-territorial non-state actors, modern terrorist groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda maintain as much influence in the ideological realm as on real territory in war-torn regions. In fact, their presence in the realm of ideas gives them more longevity than holding physical territory because of their military inferiority against conventional states. Therefore, they invest heavily on developing radical narratives to legitimise their cause and to disseminate their message.

Their narratives not only help justify their ideologies but even promote their violent methodology. The narratives are developed to propagate, propagandise, radicalise, recruit and train young cadres as well as to instil fear and issue warnings to civilians and conventional militaries and security forces.

As terrorist groups invest heavily in developing and spreading their radical narratives, it is important that states and societies develop effective counter-narratives to immunise their people from divisive messages. However, attempts at developing and disseminating counter-narratives to check radical ideologies have so far produced mixed results for a variety of reasons that have been discussed in the introductory chapter.

However, notwithstanding the continuing concerns regarding the effectiveness of strategic communication campaigns and the mostly inadequate metrics developed thus far for testing their impact

and efficacy, the importance of combating violent extremism in the ideological domain cannot be overstated.

Strategic Communication of Narratives

Counter-narratives are the most essential element of a comprehensive strategic communications campaign. In fact, "a strategic communications campaign is more likely to be successful if it is based on the cumulative effects of a multidimensional messaging strategy which is synchronised with actions on the ground".[2]

To begin with, it is important to understand what communication means and how it can be used for strategic purposes. Richard Nordquist defined communication as: "The process of sending and receiving messages through verbal or nonverbal means including speech or oral communication, writing or written communication, signs, signals, and behaviour. More simply, communication is said to be the creation and exchange of meaning."[3] According to Claude Elwood Shannon, "The fundamental problem of communication is that of reproducing at one point either exactly or approximately a message selected at another point".[4]

When it comes to *strategic communication*, it has been defined as, "the synchronization of images, actions and words to achieve a desired effect".[5] Any strategic communications programme has to have clarity of aims and objectives behind delivering its message to a clearly designated audience based on the most suitable and effective media, language and style of communication.

Counter-Narratives: What, by Whom and for Whom

The term counter-narratives in the sphere of strategic studies is of recent origin and according to Rachel Briggs and Sebastien Feve from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), signifies "attempts to challenge extremist and violent extremist messages, whether directly or indirectly through a range of online and offline means".[6]

The Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence defines counter-narratives as "a system of stories that hang together to provide a coherent view of the world for the explicit purposes of combating violent extremist narratives, and eliciting legal and non-

violent activities in support of individuals, groups, or movements, which support that worldview". It then explains them as seeking to "directly address a violent narrative after it has been delivered to an intended audience, making them a reactive type of messaging".[7]

Thus counter-narratives, unlike meta-narratives and alternative narratives, are mainly devised to debunk, discredit and demystify violent, extremist messaging. It is important to know that any message as part of a strategic communications can only be effective if the party sending out the message or communication is clear about the aims, intentions and desired effect of the message not only upon the intended receiver, but also on other possible parties that may receive the message. Thus, the sender should not use too many interlocutors for transmitting the message as that often tends to confuse or distort the originally intended meaning of the message. In addition, the medium used for the dissemination of the message should be the most suitable means for reaching out to the intended audience. However, it should be very clear to whom the message is being delivered. One of the rules is that the larger and more diverse the audience the broader and more general the message, while the smaller and more focussed the receivers of the message the sharper and more specific the instruction or appeal.

When it comes to messages against violent extremism, the selection of the right medium for dissemination in view of the reach and its acceptability among intended target audience makes it more effective. When it comes to the target audience of counter-narratives against radical ideologies, there are four categories of people that can be selected:

- Counter-narratives for population targeted by terrorists for radicalisation;
- Counter-narratives for already radicalised elements;
- Counter-narratives directed at sections of population of a state sponsoring terrorism;
- Narratives for other communities demonised in the terrorist narrative to stop them from becoming radical in reaction to the threat; and
- The grand narrative for the entire population to keep the country committed to national values and loyal to the state.

Thus, the creation of a counter-narrative is not only influenced by its content, but by the form and style of its medium of dissemination and its target audience.

The Need for Developing Grand Narrative

There has to be a multitude of subjects and styles and a variety of messaging to that a radicalised individual or a person susceptible to radicalisation needs to receive. At the same time, a principled and ideological consistency in the arguments of a counter-narrative campaign is needed for which it is essential that a core or grand narrative be developed, which should be in sync with the fundamental ideological principles of the state. For example, India should take recourse to its Constitution—the values, freedoms and duties enshrined therein—for guidance while devising counter-narrative arguments.

Types of Counter-Narratives

Counter-narratives could be developed to debunk a variety of radical narratives. Some of the types are listed below:

- *Political Counter-narratives:* Terrorism springs mainly out of political issues and not of religious issues per se. Almost all terrorist groups, including those driven by distorted religious beliefs, mostly emerge in times of a political crisis or lawlessness and pursue a reactionary political agenda. By mixing politics and religion they give a distorted prognosis of the existing situation and provide violent and radical solutions for them. focus is often on psychological causes, religious indoctrination, social and even economic approaches, but there seems to be a reluctance to counter the absurdity of radical political narratives raised by violent extremists. Impressionable minds are often not as influenced by psychological or religious causes, as by the skewed interpretations of political events, particularly in insurgency-ridden regions, which need to be countered by governments, social and political activists, media, etc. Experts in political science, law and the constitution, as well as members of

the security forces should be consulted while devising political counter-narratives.

- *Religious/Ideological Counter-narratives:* Religion is surprisingly the most potent and least understood spiritual and social institution, which is exploited very successfully by political elements to gain power by dividing communities and causing socio-political disorder. As religions are not taught in schools and universities or even by members of society, their distorted and extreme interpretations available on Internet and social media are readily accepted by young and impressionable minds in the formative years of mental development.

- *Ethical Counter-narratives:* Many terrorist groups generate extremely self-righteous narratives glorifying their ethical and moral probity as opposed to the general decadence of rival cultures. For this reason, it is important to generate ethical counter-narratives that expose the morally effete and inhuman actions of terrorist groups, like the ISIS, to prospective recruits. There is also a strong need to provide the authentic, peaceful and pluralistic interpretation of religions to counter the straitjacket of militant religious narratives promoted by terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Similarly, ethnic, tribal and caste divisions are exploited by radical elements to create social fissures in order to disturb peace and harmony in countries. Religious scholars with proven scholarly credentials as well as a moderate and patriotic outlook should be involved in developing such counter-narratives.

It has to be understood that the sections of society vulnerable to religious radicalisation have grown up having strong religious indoctrination. Therefore, the effect of liberal counter-narratives on this section of society would prove less effective than a religious counter-narrative against violent extremism and radicalisation. In this regard, the fatwa of 70,000 Indian Muslim scholars against ISIS, Taliban, Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups can be cited as one of the reasons for the miniscule number of Indian Muslims who have joined the ranks of global jihadist terror groups, thus far.[8]

- *Social Counter-narratives:* Sometimes, societies develop regressive, parochial, patriarchal and atavistic discourses and practices that are inimical to the values of liberal and civil societies. Such tendencies need to be checked as they provide the basis for extremist ideologies to thrive in society.

  Counter-narratives that expose the illiberal, anti-social and discriminatory practices of terrorist groups help in stopping impressionable minds from getting influenced by radical ideologies.

- *Historical Counter-narratives:* All radical groups provide a parochial, divisive and partisan outlook about historical and contemporary events to create an exaggerated sense of victimhood and persecution among members of a community and a heightened feeling of hate and anger towards other communities. Sometimes, these historical distortions are accepted at face value that causes a lot of acrimony and hostility among various sections of the nation. Therefore, it is important to consult accredited scholars for developing credible and hard-hitting counter-narratives against the claims of radical organisations. For example, the distorted version of history projected by Pakistan of Kashmir's accession to India is today accepted by many ingenuous Kashmiris. There is a clear need for an effective campaign to develop and disseminate the correct version of historical events by Indian authorities, as well as the media, academic institutions and members of civil society to Kashmiri population.

- *Psychological Counter-narratives:* Psychological messaging— particularly for adolescent, criminal and social psychology— can prove useful while formulating counter-narratives. Some counter-narratives could be directed towards vulnerable sections of the population, such as confused adolescent or dissident members of criminal/terrorist groups. Counter-narratives could also challenge group think or cause confusion in radical or terror groups. The adolescent and the youth have problems in developing their *individual identities and are sensitive to even their socio-cultural identities.*

They have difficulties in understanding the realities of life and in accepting the norms and conventions of the world. There should be greater acknowledgement and communication of the problems of youth, so that they understand that governments and society are aware of their issues. The identity of people with their cultures, religions, ethnic and indigenous identities in the national media and government messaging should be respected. This is to ensure that such sections may identify their communities as part of the national mix.

- *Psy-Ops Counter-narratives*: Their aim is to induce or reinforce behaviour of a target audience in favour of the government or military. These psy-op narratives could have *strategic* (aimed to achieve military/non-military purposes), *tactical/operational psyc-ops* (to create outcomes favourable for achieving military objectives).[9] They could also be useful in causing doubts, suspicion and dissensions in ranks of terrorist groups, etc. or in creating diversions, feelings of discontent or sense of failure. Jihadis should be repeatedly told by reputed religious authorities that their mode of warfare is not permissible in Islam and that they would end up in hell, not heaven by doing so. This messaging would eventually create a seed of doubt and confusion even among the most committed of fidayeen (suicide bomber) fighters. Some counter-narratives can also be used (albeit rarely and with great caution) to cause dissension and confusion among leaders or members of a terrorist group or allied terrorist groups.

- *Defamatory Counter-narratives*: These counter-narratives can prove effective in tarnishing public sympathy and support for radical groups and elements over issues of immorality, corruption, dishonesty and betrayal. Articles, songs, videos and social media channels could be used to carry out such messages. Humour, satire, slogans, rumours, etc. could be employed for disseminating such messages.[10]

  There should also be immediate rebuttals to false claims, dishonest and deceitful actions as well as criminal conduct that particularly highlight illicit ways of funding (the use of money for drugs, prostitution and kidnapping) to create moral aversion

among potential recruits, who are often initially ideologically driven.

- *Philosophical Counter-narratives:* It has often been found that what is generally thought of as a theological position in the discourse of a religious extremist discourse is actually not founded on religion, but is merely the interpretation of a small school of a religious sect. At times, a religious concept can be interpreted in different philosophical ways that is equally tenable while understanding the word of the Scriptures. For instance, Maududi's interpretation of the concept of sovereignty in Islam at times appears to be theo-democratic or smacking of republicanism and is sceptical of a monarchical system of governance that runs counter to the view of many traditional Islamist scholars.[11]

In fact, many Islamic scholars have historically approved monarchical systems, which even includes Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab who sanctified Saudi monarchy of Muhammad ibn Sa'ud in 1744.[12] Therefore, philosophical arguments, promoting modern values and tenets of liberalism and humanism, can be used even on theological issues to create counter-narratives.

As discussed earlier, counter-narratives should be developed and disseminated as part of a clear and coherently designed strategic communications policy and programme, in sync with national and constitutional values, sensibilities, particularities and goals.

Their content, purpose and target audience should determine the most suitable agent and medium of dissemination, which in turn would determine the language, the content, the style and the factors of legitimacy essential for greater resonance. Counter-narratives can convey a range of emotions and a variety of content based on the objectives of a campaign.

For causing deterrence among radicals, certain counter-narratives could create *fear* of punishment both in this world and if relevant in the next. In case of radical Islamist terrorists, doubts can be created regarding the ideological authenticity or validity of the radical cause, the prospect of success regarding the mission, questions could

be raised regarding the certainty of rewards in this world and the Islamic afterlife (Qiyamah), the sincerity and competence of the leadership, the fate of dear ones, etc.

Alternative Narratives

Unlike counter-narratives that are developed to refute and discredit the radical and extremist narratives, *alternative narratives* provide positive and constructive legal and non-violent alternatives for redressing grievances of communities targeted by radicals so that the community could achieve its socio-political goals.

Whereas counter-narratives directly confront radical narratives and its assertions, alternative narratives make an indirect approach by supporting moderate voices, promoting positive, humanistic and liberal values.[13] Some experts in the field believe that alternative narratives that espouse constitutional values and provide positive alternatives and guidance are more useful than counter-narratives that are reactive and often negative in their mode of messaging.

They could also provide narratives acknowledging and endorsing the cultural and ethnic contribution of members of the aggrieved community towards the nation or society to help the community afflicted with radicalism overcome its sense of being neglected or alienated. "Unlike counter-narratives, alternative-narratives are not explicitly intended to directly confront violent narratives, although they may have secondary outcomes, which do displace them".[14]

Alternative narratives do not highlight "what they are against" but "what they are for".[15] For instance, alternative narratives in India could highlight values enshrined in the Indian constitution such as secularism, fundamental rights, democracy, safeguards for minorities, rule of law, respect for human rights (including women's rights), pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, freedom, etc.[16]

Types of Alternative Narratives

- *National and Constitutional Narrative:* The ideological premise for any counter-narratives campaign should be based on modern, moderate, democratic values, and for India on the high ideals of its honourable Constitution. The values, rights, duties and freedoms extolled therein provide the best blueprint for combating any

form of violent extremist ideology. Even if the values and norms are well known to the public, there is always the need to reinforce and reinvigorate their essence in the hearts and minds of the population through effective narrative campaigns.

- *Progress, Development and Employment Narrative:* It has been found that the projects and initiatives undertaken and completed by government for the development and progress of people are not communicated to them properly. Many government schemes and programmes for the marginalised sections, the youth and other sections of the population vulnerable to messages of extremism and radicalisation are not aware of the options available for leading a prosperous, meaningful and respectable life.

  The general mode of cynicism and questioning by opposition parties and an incredulous media often ignores and underplays the aspects of good governance that creates unwarranted apathy, distrust and dissatisfaction among the public and allows radical elements to skew the perceptions of the impressionable. Narratives informing the public, particularly sections of the population susceptible to radical discourse, need to be informed about the progress and development initiatives taken by the government. Business-friendly and employment generating schemes and opportunities have to be sent out in a highly attractive, compelling and convincing manner to remove any misapprehensions from the minds of the target audience.

- *Liberal Narrative:* One very important type of narrative, which should be used to destroy the concepts associated with the master narrative of radical, terrorist organisations is the liberal narrative. Extremist and radical organisations follow highly divisive, collectivist ideologies that offer little room for dissent or difference of opinion in the framework of their alternative system of governance.

  This ideology of collectivism should be contested by championing the philosophy of individualism, which is espoused by liberalism and democracy.

- *Narratives Extolling Morality and Ethics:* Social messages of good conduct, honesty, generosity, respect for elders and proper etiquettes need to be developed and promoted to counter messages of hate, abuse and disrespect, which has been confused for free speech in contemporary society.
- *Acknowledging Role of Affected Communities in Nation-Building:* Narratives extolling the contribution of all segments of society, including people of all religions, castes, regions, cultures, ethnicities, always help in creating goodwill in communities struggling with radicalism towards their state and citizenry.
  Members of every community should feel the role of their community is valued and has contributed to the nation building process and national heroes, monuments and cultural marvels of the communities should be respected and acknowledged. This exercise would help these communities identify themselves with the country, alleviate sense of alienation or a sense of being removed or isolated from fellow citizens belonging to other communities.
- *Art and Culture Narratives:* One of the best ways to blunt extremist ideological and religious extremism is to promote art and culture in society. The discipline of aesthetics brings about refinement in conduct, righteousness, spirituality and morality, while undermining the trappings of dogma.
- *Narratives of Rehabilitation:* These narratives should provide hope to radical elements to mend their ways so that their futures could be saved in case they want to completely give up their extremist orientation and behaviour.
  Such narratives could prove useful to those radicals who wish to quit the path of extremism and terrorism, but continue fighting as they fear they would never be accepted by mainstream society.
- *Counter-narratives about Harm, Destruction Caused by Terrorists:* Counter-narratives devised in written, oral, audio-visual and other mediums could be circulated to illustrate the destruction caused by the extremist campaign and the futility of its radical ways.
- *Counter-narratives by Victims and Reclaimed:* Narrations by victims of terrorism as well as by those members of terrorist

groups who have been reclaimed from the ideological clutches of violent extremist movements can prove highly useful in dissuading young and impressionable minds from joining the ranks of the radical brigades.

Advantages of Communication by Government, Security Forces

There is a general misconception that governments should not disseminate counter-radicalisation messages, as these agencies are not trusted by radical groups anyways. However, governments and militaries are known for employing psy-ops techniques related to public information, perception management and public diplomacy which can be useful in counter-radicalisation process also. Governments may need to inform the masses, including people vulnerable to the radical masses the state's version of the policies and measures taken for the benefit of the common good. Governments can also communicate and guide impressionable and ingenuous members of the population on ways to redress their issues and concerns in a legally permissible manner so that they avoid the radical path of rebellion and violence.

Reaching out to all sections of the population helps develop greater trust and understanding between the government and the people. Therefore, even overt messaging by the government should not be viewed as inconsequential on a supposed presumption that its message will not resonate. However, there is some merit in the contention that people generally do not like accepting advice or instructions from authority figures, let alone extremist elements.

How to Develop Counter-Narratives

Textbook rules for developing counter-narratives are still a work in progress. The art of developing persuasive messages have been studied and analysed for ages, research papers on the best techniques for countering a political or extremist in a strategically effective manner have only recently started appearing. In this respect, the recent scholarly works of Kurt Braddock, John Horgan, James P. Dillard, William McCants, Jeffry R. Halverson, H. L. Goodall Jr.,

and Steven R. Corman is commendable, but the expertise is still under development.

- *Overview of the Master Narrative and supporting Sub-Narratives:* The first step toward starting a counter-narrative building exercise should be to understand the key ideological concepts, the strategic imperatives for supporting such concepts and the causal links that join and integrate the sub-narratives into a master narrative. In this respect, it might also be useful to chart the evolution of these narrative frameworks within the history of a radical movement or organisation.

  All ideas and concepts put forward in any extremist narrative, even if they might initially appear to be separate and at times disjointed from each other, are generally designed and calibrated as part of a bigger philosophy and point to a hierarchical conclusion in a precise end state, such as a Global Caliphate in the case of global jihadism.

  At the initial level, political narratives build on several small but essential concepts that serve as the staircase for a grand ideological superstructure. Sometimes disparate streams of arguments, concepts and interpretations—coming from affiliate sources—serve as the basis for their larger ideological construct. For instance, modern liberalism is weaved around a gamut of concepts such as individual liberty, equality, secularism, democracy, etc.

  Conversely, concepts of 'tawheed', 'shariah', 'khilaafah', 'al wala al-bara', jihad, etc. are fundamental concepts to the Islamist political ideology. These basic concepts serve as essential cogs in the grand narrative and so they are in themselves inviolable. Their desecration could bring down the entire carefully constructed ideological edifice.

  Thus, the general method employed for deconstructing a narrative involves exposing the causal anomalies in the chain of ideas presented in a narrative. It should be noted that just as in literary fiction, a religious or political narrative is built around a chain of ideas that need to rationally connect to each other and justify their progression.

Therefore, any counter-narrative needs to be adept at finding flaws in the narrative chain of thoughts, smart at identifying the weak links, the outright lies and broad generalisations. Counter-narratives should also be capable of parsing and exposing propaganda techniques discussed earlier in the book like red herrings, ad hominems, demagogy, non-sequiturs, bandwagoning, card stacking, straw man, glittering generalities, etc.

Thus, much of the content of counter-narratives comes out of the identification and exposing of these flaws in the weakness of the causal links that join to make the master narrative.

- *Identify, attack and invalidate fundamental tenets of the radical ideology:* The first step in this regard is the identification of the fundamental concepts and tenets of the radical ideology. For example, the ideology of Salafi-jihadism (to which belong almost all global jihadists like Al-Qaeda and ISIS) is built around the concepts of jihad, the Caliphate, Islamic state, 'takfir', 'hakamiyya' and 'al wala al bara'.

  Some of these concepts are found in Islamic texts with a benign connotation, while others have been concocted and lie outside the orthodox legal terminologies of the Sunni and Shiite schools (fiqh) of Islamic law (Sharia). By exposing the self-professed alteration from the classical understanding of these terms and the introductiom of new terms like 'tawahhush' (barbarity) by the Salafi-Wahhabi jihadists to the young impressionable Muslim minds, we could save the less informed from falling into the trap of violent extremism and terrorism.

Thus, the deconstruction of the extremist narrative itself develops the counter-narrative when it meticulously takes down the ideological bases on which the extremist message is founded. This process invalidates and delegitimises (even religiously) the pretext for fighting in the name of religion.

- *Decoupling the causal and analogical linkages of the arguments:* Counter-radicalisation experts like Halverston and Shelley contend that extremist and terrorist groups draw comparisons

between present and past events or even mythological and fictional accounts to validate their ideologies or legitimise their actions.

Shelley is said to have given a taxonomy[17] of analogical counterarguments to contradict such false linkages in order to invalidate the extremist arguments they seek to make. "This taxonomy is based on two key questions. First, is the analogy in the target narrative valid? Second, what is the goal of the counter-narrative designed to refute the terrorist narrative's analogy?"[18]

- *Theme Analysis: Decoding the Implicit Ideological and Emotive Themes:* The themes of extremist narratives are heavily laced with intense emotions of hate, humiliation, anger, betrayal and the need for revenge. They speak of either the religious or racial supremacism, cultural exceptionalism, historical glories, accounts of treachery and betrayals, victimhood and persecution, demonisation of the 'others'. Factual accuracy of events and intellectual probity is sacrificed for emotional resonance and appeal. Many sub-narratives—political, historical, cultural, etc.—are constructed that twist, manipulate, distort or even fantastically invent past actions and historical occurences to promote the emotive resonance of a radical account. These emotive strands latent in the extremist narrative need to be extricated, decoded and neutralised by counter-narratives, whose language needs to be conciliatory, convincing and non-confrontational.

- *Do not Accord Religious or Legally Sanctimonious Terminology to Terrorists:* A leading German expert on language and cognition, Elizabeth Wehling states in her book, *Political Framing* that language and even selection of words has a profound effect on people's minds in the realm of politics. According to her, using the name Islamic State or IS for the terrorist group subconsciously conveys the idea to the audience that ISIS is genuinely Islamic as well as a state, both of which are not only wrong, but give the terror group legitimacy and greater appeal and recognition. Thus, Wehling states that if one

wants to develop counter narratives, one should avoid using the same frames as the opponent, because it reinforces the picture the frame seeks to transmit to the listeners.[19]

It is for this reason that many Indian Muslim scholars, like Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani and former Indian cabinet minister, Arif Mohammad Khan have emphasized that the word 'jihad' should not be associated with the violence of Muslim terrorist organisations, nor should their members be called 'jihadis'. Both suggest that these terrorists should not be called 'jihadis' but 'fasadis'.[20] Similarly, other notable Islamic scholars like Tahirul Qadri[21] and Shaykh Hamza Yusuf[22] suggests that these terrorists follow the teachings of a historically excommunicated Islamic sect 'Khawarij' and should be given that title.

- *Expose Nuance in Simplistic Extremist Binaries:* Terrorist and violent extremists of all denominations speak in terms of binaries, good versus evil, us versus them, etc. Counter-narratives need to expose the falsity of such Manichean falsities. Their themes should highlight the good and the bad as well as the nuances between them, the humanities and virtues found among people of the so-called 'Other', etc. By exposing nuance in the arguments of the extremists, the target audience can be exposed to the 'devil in the details' hidden in the extremist narrative.

- *Develop Counter-narratives based on the Medium and Audience:* Counter-narratives cannot be developed without an awareness of the target audience, their level of education, their economic status, their regional and socio-political milieu as well as their religious and cultural ethos. These factors also determine the mediums—electronic and print media, public events and forums, educational curriculums and academic papers, sermons and speeches in places of worship, seminaries and community centers, prison and rehabilitation centers, etc.—to be used for dissemination of counter-narratives. Thus, the creation of a counter-narrative is not only influenced by its content, but by the form and style of its medium of dissemination and its target audience.

- *Employ Techniques of Narrative Persuasion:* Developers of counter narratives should be quick to expose the false claims and devious propaganda techniques of terrorist groups. Besides using the Aristotlean injunctions of logos, ethos and pathos (with more emphasis on pathos and ethos), counter-narratives should incorporate the techniques of narrative persuasion,[23] such as identification, parasocial interaction,[24] and psychological transportation[25] that are essential for making any narrative resonant and persuasive for its audience.
- *Never Position Security Forces as the 'Other' of the General Populace:* In any counter-narrative, the general population of a terrorism-afflicted or insurgency-hit area should be referred to as an important section of the citizenry, whom security forces are rescuing from divisive or external forces. In no communication should there be reference that a large section of a state's population, for example of Jammu and Kashmir, is getting alienated from the national mainstream or supports stone-pelting or other illegal activities against Indian security forces.

  Instead, care should be taken to write that the Indian citizenry of the state stands strongly behind the national security forces and supports action against activities of some misguided youth involved in stone pelting and terrorism-related incidents. The general population should be shown as supportive of the security agencies and opposed to the machinations of the terrorists and insurgents, and the security forces should always be shown as the defenders of the local population and not as alien outsiders trying to gain local sympathy. This seemingly obvious point is often overlooked in the statements of the press and even responsible leaders and at times important officials.
- *Employ Moral, Ethical Arguments:* Counter-Narratives need to present not only legal justification, but also moral uprightness as the guiding force behind the decisions, actions and successes of the country's actions in the fight against terrorism. Terrorists have the dubious quality of perpetrating the most inhuman kinds of violence and still claiming the moral high ground. In response, counter-narratives should not treat the immorality of

terrorists as being self-evident, but stress on the inhuman, illegal and immoral perversion of terrorist thought and present a very strong and moral case in defence of all the actions of security forces.

- *Use Ideational Frames, Myths and Archetypes from Religion and Culture:* Counter-narratives must employ the myths, symbols, idioms and archetypes associated with the cultural traditions and religious beliefs of the target audience and should not let these be exploited by the terrorists. The ISIS very cunningly used the Prophet's seal and the end-time reference to black flags of the righteous army to their advantage in order to gain symbolic legitimacy for their unholy and non-Islamic campaign. Even when a terrorist group is able to use such symbols, the effort of the counter-narratives campaign should be to expose the flaw and illegitimacy of the terror group from using such sanctimonious references in their public relations campaigns.

- *Find Religious, Cultural Themes Compatible with National Ideals:* Counter-narratives should find religious and cultural references, narrations, stories, etc. that are compatible with national ideals, heritage and institutions. This would establish national philosophy and values in the cultural ethos, mores and values of the target audience and make them immune to extremist and radical discourse.

  Thus, values of tolerance, art and architecture, administrative and legal institutions deriving principles from certain historical cultures and religions would develop a sense of belonging and devotion to the country. It would make alienated members of society revert to their national cause and identity.

- *Question the Criminality of Terrorism:* Counter-narratives should be developed that question the legitimacy of terrorist and extremist groups by exposing and questioning their involvement in criminal activities, such as the use of indiscriminate violence, drug money, treatment of prisoners of war, slave trade, sex slaves, etc. Narration of incidents exposing the inhumanity of terror groups should be popularised and used in public relations campaigns.

- *Be Non-partisan in Ideological, Sectarian Matters (Don't Present Sufis as Better than Salafis):* Sometimes, governments and media organisations endorse one community, sect or sub-sect because of its supposedly peaceful or moderate ideology. This presents other communities in a less favourable light and sometimes they become averse to the government for not being given due respect.

  For example giving undue importance to Sufi groups, as opposed to Salafi groups in the war against terrorism could inadvertently push Salafi groups away from the national mainstream and make them more susceptible to the terrorist message. Such preferences could prove counter-productive.

- *Expose Flaws in Vision, Methodology, End-state Claims of Terror Groups:* The meta-narratives as well as the various sub-narratives of terrorist groups should be vilified, ridiculed and even critically analysed, invalidated and discredited. In this regard, not only should terrorist ideals and actions should be morally delegitimised, but the flaws and dangers of pursuing the mad and indiscriminate form of violence should also be highlighted in counter-narratives.

  The importance of compromise and acceptance of moderation as a better means for addressing the realistic aspirations and redressal of grievances of the public should be highlighted. The failures of terrorist groups in not alleviating the problems of the affected community and their role in worsening their own purported cause should be part of a public relations exercise.

- *The use of PSY-OPS in Counter-narratives:* Counter-narratives devised to demoralise terrorist cadres, inveigle and deceive their ranks to cause dissension and discord in terrorist ranks, the use of intra-sectarian wedges to create fissures in terrorist groups, creating narratives that raise questions about leadership skills and acumen, fuel leadership feuds even through misinformation and disinformation techniques (such as the use of rumours and accusations) could be used in combating terrorism.

- *Use Branding, Myth Making for Developing Role Models:* Counter-narratives should project better alternatives for its target audience in terms of better leadership of the community,

and new role models should be groomed and projected for affected communities that advocate the path of moderation and are more amenable to the interests of the state. For this purpose, the techniques of branding and myth-making should be employed.

Dialogue and Strategic Ambiguity

In their analysis of what they deemed a "widespread recognition that the US public diplomacy efforts worldwide have failed,"[26] strategic communication experts Bud Goodall Angela Trethewey and Kelly McDonald have noted in their paper: "Strategic Ambiguity, Communication, and Public Diplomacy in an Uncertain World: Principles and Practices", about "a new way of thinking about ambiguity as strategy in strategic communication initiatives".

According to these scholars, failures of strategic communication in the campaign against terrorism are the result of various governments' reliance on an outdated one-way model of influence.[27]

Derived from an engineering study of telephone communication by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver in the late 1940s, this model posits that messages (be they verbal and nonverbal) move from a sender (or source), through a channel (e.g. airwaves, lightwaves) to a receiver.

According to this model, meanings are contained in the words chosen by the sender and are passively interpreted by receivers. In this model, it is mistakenly assumed that the sender and receiver share the same language code and culture. It is also averred in this old model that repetition of the same message, sent through the same channels to the same receivers over time reduces outside interference with the intended message (that is, noise) and improves the prospects of delivering the desired outcome.[28]

However, over the years it has been found that no audience is truly 'passive' in its reception and interpretation of a message. According to recent strategic communication scholars, "The human mind actively engages words and actions within a particular context; places them into pre-existing historical, cultural, and political frameworks; and evaluates the meanings of the message based on

perceptions of a source's credibility, intention, trustworthiness, and caring".[29]

Thus, the mental attitude and cultural orientation of the receiver of a message plays an important part in which it would be understood that could be quite different from the intended message of the communicator. In fact, even the meaning of a word may differ from one person to the other and everyone may not exactly interpret a word based on its meaning given in the dictionary. As David Berlo states: "Meanings are in people, not in words". Berlo went on to say, "People can have similar meanings only to the extent that they have had, or can anticipate having, similar experiences."[30] Therefore, no two people can have exactly the same meaning for any idea.

According to most strategic communication experts, there has been a breakdown in communications mainly because of a 'monologic' campaign by governments to win the hearts and minds of people afflicted with the menace of radicalisation, as they presume the unlikely success of 'dialogic' strategies.

In general, the process of dialogue itself opens up the avenue of an honest exchange of ideas between or among actors who agree to suspend judgement, speak honestly, and remain profoundly open to change.[31]

In fact, even the process of dialogue may not be able to always outgrow the old monologic model for communication that was driven by a "control" objective and was firmly rooted in the assumption of a shared organisational culture that respected hierarchies of power, strict divisions of labour, and the power of the higher authorities in the company to direct work activities as well as their meanings.

Instead of mere dialogue, Steven R. Corman, Angela Trethewey, H. Lloyd Goodall have suggested the concept of 'strategic ambiguity' as a communication strategy. This strategy is said to occupy a "theoretical middle ground between monologic control and dialogic empowerment models. Strategic ambiguity values the symbolic and dialogic nature of language and the multicultural bases for interpretations of meanings".[32] However, the aim of strategically ambiguous communication should not be 'shared meaning' but instead 'organised action.'[33] Five principles have been proposed to guide this new communication policy:

- To consider communication a two-way interaction and meanings to be emergent over time. To this end, a willingness needs to be demonstrated to engage the messages of other leaders and spokespersons without seeking immediate closure or insisting on the inherent 'rightness' of one's own messages.

- To avoid repeating the same message in the same channel and the same spokesperson. One should not use a monologic model because it encourages spokespersons to repeat the same basic ideas and messages without accounting for the meaning-making practices of the intended audiences. This should be replaced with'strategic engagement' as a guiding principle of communication with diverse audiences.

- To avoid controlling a message's meaning in cultures or audiences one does not fully understand. There is an inverse relationship between control over a message's meanings and our understanding of the cultures wherein it will be interpreted. The less one knows about cultures, languages, and religions, the less control one can exert on the likely meanings attributed to public diplomacy messages. Therefore, a good understanding of cultures is important while delivering a counter-narrative.

- For greater resonance of strategic communication, particularly counter-narratives, one should build trust and credibility on a longer term basis, along with a deep understanding of cultures, languages, and religions.

- There should be emphasis on 'unified diversity' based not just on meanings, but principles of cooperation found in cultures, by avoiding messages of dominance and power.

Messaging may sometimes need ambiguity to avoid a hostile target audience rejecting a direct message outright. One method for delivering a message under the garb of ambiguity is what Aristotle called 'enthymeme'.[34] Its unstated premise is in effect supplied by the listener, leading him or her to the 'natural' implied conclusion. An enthymeme is a truncated syllogism (a set of premises and a conclusion, used in formal logic); that is, it is a syllogism with a

missing premise. The audience participates by supplying the missing premise via its cultural identification with the speaker.[35]

Literally, the word enthymeme means 'something in the mind'. When the audience and the narrator share a cultural identity, they can communicate without making every assumption explicit. Through enthymemes, the narrator persuades the audience by drawing on its cultural beliefs and attitudes. He or she invites the audience to complete the argument based on identification with his or her background. Enthymemes are a powerful tool of persuasion because they allow audience members to draw on their preexisting beliefs—those that are integral to the institutional order.[36]

Thus, through such forms of strategic communication models, many contemporary strategic experts believe that the setbacks faced by flowing the old monologic, top-down model of strategic communication directed at communities afflicted with radicalisation can be avoided.

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6.   An Islamic Counter to Terrorism

Remember your own faults, before you mention faults of others[1]
—Prophet Muhammad[2]

One of the greatest sins in Islam is the evil of self-righteousness. Moral outrage against perceived misdeeds of 'others' often offers an excuse to contemporary neophytes to unleash their hideous inner demons in violent indignation, while avoiding the more difficult task of introspection and self-reform. Even psychological research has proven that self-righteous outrage in people against the 'injustices' of the world may not necessarily arise out of a sense of altruism, but hide a self-centred desire to superficially enhance an individual's personal status as a "Very Good Person".[3]

Various schools of Islam have developed several methods (tariqa) for the "sanctification" and "purification" of this hideous self-centred self. However, the process of 'taskiyat al nafs' , which refers to a course for transforming the 'nafs' (an individual's bestial and the carnal self or desires) from its lowly state of self-centrality to higher states of purity through greater submission to the 'Will of God (a practice initiated by the Prophet himself), is too tiresome and pointless for the self-appointed 'jihadis' of our times.

The conveyor-belt 'jihadists' of the modern world are mostly anunschooled and irreligious people, who have taken to criminal and anti-social behaviour in the name of defending a religion. This chapter seeks to provide prospective samples of possible counter-

narratives that may be used to invalidate the religious premise, principles and concepts presented by most jihadist groups around the world.

A lot of research has gone into developing these proposed counter-narratives. However, before launching any counter-narrative campaign it would only be appropriate to verify the naaratives from noted scholars of Islam in India and abroad, such as the Darul Uloom in Deoband, Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama in Lucknow, Al Azhar Sharif (the thousand year old Islamic university of Cairo), Islamic University of Madinah, etc.

Although the concept of jihad, in the context of military warfare, has been in vogue for centuries, its controversial interpretation by medieval Muslim rulers for political ends has been further marred by violent non-state actors in modern times by introducing new ideological variants at odds with the orthodox understanding of the term. Salafi Jihadism (a neologism ironically coined by a strategic expert Gilles Kepel[4]), which believes in an ideology that deviates from the understanding of jihad, as enshrined by all the four schools of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence, has sanctioned hitherto religiously proscribed forms of warfare, namely non-state militancy, indiscriminate violence and terrorism, leaderless campaigns, lone-wolf violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide, etc.

Young and impressionable Muslim youth are increasingly falling into the trap of the deviant ideologies of these terrorist groups. Similarly, non-Muslim radical elements are also becoming increasingly Islamophobic, as they believe that the religion of Islam is itself hostile and violent to other faiths and to modern values of liberalism, human rights and democracy.

Many scholars question the use of religious counter-narratives in counter-radicalisation campaigns and argue that it only exacerbates the Muslim community's aversion to modern enlightenment ideals of liberalism and secularism. However, religious counter-narratives have been found to be more persuasive among religiously inclined sections susceptible to radical ideologies than liberal counter-messaging that has little resonance among the intended audience to begin with.

As jihadist narratives are built around religion, and they distort religion to promote their militant agenda, the best approach should be to defang their narrative and restore religion to its spiritual domain, by removing it from all political and military trappings.

The aim of developing these counter-narratives is not merely to ward off the jihadist threat but to present the true, moderate message of Islam that celebrates plurality of beliefs, views and opinions and is not hostile toward the spiritual and ideological persuasion of other faiths and practices. This exercise should help build a harmonious society in India. The country could present its own version of Islam, one which contradict the versions of Islam projected by belligerent nations like Pakistan and terrorist organisations like the ISIS. In this regard, the country need not promote any particular sect or movement of Islam as better or more acceptable than others, such as Sufism, for in doing so one ends up isolating the very sects that are most susceptible to accepting radical ideologies.

Proposed Thematic Samples of Anti-jihadist Religious Counter-narratives

In the following section, we propose counter-narratives to some of the basic conceptual narratives being promoted by jihadists. However, these counter-narratives are concise and succinct and do not discuss any issue at length and function merely as possible samples for a counter-narrative message. They also need to be officially approved and endorsed by established religious authorities, although most of them are derived from authorised and authentic sources of Islamic theological sources. Being of religious derivation, the counter-narratives may sound panegyric, but then that comes with the territory.

• **Islam accepts plurality of religions:** The jihadist terror groups and extremist Muslims promote the misconception that Muslims are not supposed to befriend non-Muslims and that Islam is perpetually in a state of hostility with other religions and people of other doctrinal and ideological persuasions. This line of thinking is not only incorrect but detrimental to our country's social harmony and composite culture.

Thus, the Quran itself acknowledges that the places of worship of other religions also worship the one God and all communities promote and compete with each other in their spiritual quest.

> Had it not been that Allah checks one set of people by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, wherein the Name of Allah is mentioned much would surely have been pulled down. Verily, Allah will help those who help His (Cause). Truly, Allah is All-Strong, All-Mighty.[5]
>
> —Quran, 22:40

This verse clearly shows that Islam accepts that plurality exists in the approach towards the spiritual attainment of the divine and that all places of worship seek to commune with the divine.

In another instance, Quran reiterates the same idea of God's wisdom behind multiplicity of faiths and communities:

> For each We have appointed a divine law and a traced-out way. Had Allah willed He could have made you all one community, but that He may try you by that which He hath given you (He hath made you as ye are). So vie one with another in good works. Unto Allah ye will all return, and He will then inform you of that wherein ye differ.[6]
>
> —Quran, Verse 5:48

• **Islam asks Muslims to be kind and just towards all non-Muslims:** The Quran instructs Muslims to be kind and compassionate to polytheists and other non-Muslims and not put all of them in the category of those Meccans who had persecuted the early followers of the Prophet. Thus, it states:

> Allah does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those polytheists who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity.[7]
>
> —Quran, Verse 60:8

The Prophet is considered merciful for all of creation 'Rahmatul-alameen' and not just for Muslim community. He was courageous and his decorated sword bore the inscription:

> Forgive him who wrongs you; Join him who cuts you off; Do good to him who does evil to you, and speak the truth although it be against yourself.[8]
>
> In fact, Prophet Muhammad has severely warned Muslims against any mistreatment of non-Muslims (muahid) with whom they have entered any mutually accepted agreement. In this respect, all Indian Muslims have an agreement with fellow Indian citizens of other communities under the Indian constitution and so they have no religious sanction to harm any citizen or work against the peace and security of the country.
>
> Beware! Whoever is cruel and hard on Muahid (non-Muslims under covenant or fellow citizens), curtails their rights, burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will; I (Prophet Muhammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgment.[9]
>
> —Hadith in Abu Dawud

In another Hadith, the Prophet has been even more severe and has spoken out against killing of any 'Muahid' (non-Muslim with whom there is a treaty or 'ahad' of peace or is a co-citizen under a mutually accepted constitution or charter).

> If any Muslim kills a non-Muslim (Muahid) then the Muslim shall not even smell the fragrance of Paradise although the fragrance of Paradise would have been perceived from the distance of travelling for 40 years.[10]
>
> —Hadith in Sahih Bukhari

In fact, this Hadith is incorporated in the strictures of Islamic law and so Muslim citizens of India are religiously prohibited to kill any fellow non-Muslim citizen (as Muslims have accepted the Indian constitution) and this is one of the best defence against any kind of radicalisation.

Another oft-quoted Hadith of the Prophet states:

> To protect the rights of non-Muslims is amongst the primary duties of mine.[11]
>
> —Hadith in Sunan Baihaqi

In this regard, it must be noted that Darul Uloom Deoband has declared that Hindus of India should not be called 'Kafir'. In 2009, its spokesman issued the statement: "One can call someone non-Muslim, but not kafir by any means,"[12] as now the term has assumed a derogatory connotation.

Again, the Quran emphasizes not to harbour hatred or ill-will even towards adversaries and enemies in war because it is possible that these people might become close friends at a later date and then one might regret one's earlier conduct.

> It may be that God will grant love (and friendship) between you and those whom ye (now) hold as enemies. For God has power (over all things); And God is Oft-Forgiving, Msost Merciful.
>
> —Quran, Verse 60:7

• **Jihad means 'struggle' not 'war', and is not a violent concept:** For a very long time, Muslims and non-Muslims have been using the term 'jihad' as if it is synonymous with religious war. The word for war in Arabic is 'harb' and in Quran the word 'qital' or slaughter is used. War is not looked upon in Islam as a holy act, but becomes a necessary evil only when all other peaceful options have been exhausted and there is an imminent and unavoidable existential danger to a state.

But 'jihad' simply means struggle. In Islamic scriptures, it is used in the concept of struggling for righteous causes and mainly includes non-violent actions, both at the personal (spiritual, intellectual, physical, educational, behavourial levels, etc.), familial, social, occupational, legal, political, diplomatic and sometimes when under attack under threat of physical violence as part of self-defence.

Similarly, the term 'jihad fi sabilillah' does not mean warfare for the sake of Allah, but striving to do good deeds for the sake of God and righteousness and not for the sake of worldly gains or fame. Thus, any effort or even war made by a Muslim individual, group or country made for personal or political reasons cannot be called jihad. According to the Holy Quran, the permission for fighting is only given for self-defence.

> Permission to fight is given to those who are being attacked, because they have been wronged.[13]
>
> —Quran, 22:39

According to noted Islamic scholars like Tahirul Qadri, there are 35 verses in the Quran that contain the word 'jihad' or its derivatives in the form of noun or verb. Out of these 35 verses, 31 verses using the word 'jihad' mention the word struggle in its non-violent form. The remaining four instances, where jihad is used is in the context of 'defensive war'.

This standard stricture of war only in self-defence is well established that it was contested by Syed Qutb, the founder of modern jihadism, when he said: "Those who say that Islamic Jihad was merely for the defence of the 'Homeland of Islam' diminish the greatness of the Islamic way of life".[14] Therefore, it is Syed Qutb, who is the first to have put forth the idea of 'offensive jihad'.

In the words of A.E. Stahl, there have been "Islamic theosophists, before Qutb, who had advocated offensive jihad in order to reform society. Though their writings, such as Ibn Taymiyya and his views of Jihad on the Monogls and Mamluks, are not Islamic doctrine but rather interpretation".[15]

In fact, Islam's concept of defensive jihad is said to concentrate more on perfecting one's inner self first and then society. The greater jihad according to Islam is the jihad against one's own evil temptations and misgivings. Thus after returning from a campaign,

> The Prophet said:"We are finished with the lesser jihad; now we are starting the greater jihad." At this his companion Jabir ibn Abd

Allah asked him: "What is the greater jihad?" he replied, "It is the struggle against one's evil self".[16]

—Hadith of Bayhaqi

Even though Bin Laden's mentor Abdullah Azzam questioned the authenticity of this Hadith, there is no doubt that the Prophet did not endorse violence but peaceful protest, akin to *Gandhi's satyagraha, as the highest form of jihad*. Thus, the Prophet said:

Tariq ibn Shihab reported: A man asked the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, "What is the best jihad?" The Prophet said, "A word of truth in front of a tyrannical ruler."[17]

—Hadith in Musnad of Ahmad

Therefore, the most exalted form of jihad is non-violent persuasion according to Islam. Global Muslim clerics and thousands of Indian clerics denounce terrorism as against Islam.

It is important to note here that 70,000 Indian Muslim clerics have passed a 'fatwa' against the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and the militant group that calls itself the Islamic State and in denunciation of terrorism in December 2015.[18] Earlier on 1 June 2008, Darul Uloom Deoband issued a fatwa against terrorism attended by thousands of its clerics and students and stated: "Islam rejects all kinds of unjust violence, breach of peace, bloodshed, murder and plunder and does not allow it in any form."[19] Meanwhile, Islamic seminary of Barelvi sect issued a 'fatwa' in 2016 against Mumbai terror attacks mastermind Hafiz Saeed declaring him anti-Islamic.[20]

Globally, the Grand Mufti of the Kaaba in Mecca,[21] the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation,[22] al-Azhar University in Cairo[23] (it has set up International Institute for Counter-Terrorism), the Islamic Society of North America, The Group of South African Muslim Scholars and several Islamic centers in Indonesia, Malaysia and other parts of the world have condemned terrorism and terrorist organisations like ISIS on several occasions. It is interesting to note that the acclaimed Al Azhar University of Cairo (which is over 1,000 year old and

deemed the Vatican of Sunni Islam), has issued a fatwa calling counter-terrorism operations as 'jihad'.[24]

• **Islam against war, deems peace God's gift:** Unlike the claims of terror groups like ISIS that claim that the state of war is to be desired and welcomed, there are many references in Islamic scriptures that call for the avoidance of violence and war.

> Whosoever kills a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind, and whoso saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind.
>
> —Quran 5:32[25]

> The Quran states that God always tries to create circumstances to foil the war-like plans of warmongers:
> Every time they kindled the fire of war, Allah extinguished it. And they strive throughout the land causing corruption, and Allah does not like corrupters.
>
> —Quran 5:64

There are also instructions to Muslims in the same Surah urging them against waging war out of hatred:

> You who believe! Show integrity for the sake of God, bearing witness with justice. Do not let hatred for a people incite you into not being just. Be just. That is closer to heedfulness. Heed God (alone). God is aware of what you do.
>
> —Quran 5:8

There is a confirmed Hadith tradition, found in collections of the six most respected compilers in Sunni Islam which states:

> The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Do not wish to meet the enemy in battle, but if you meet them then be patient.[26]

Islam preaches mildness and is opposed to every form of aggressiveness and harshness:

> God is mild and is fond of mildness and He gives to the mild what He does not give to the harsh.[27]
>
> —Prophet Muhammad

• **Defensive war to end with at first sign of peace:** The Quran and the Prophet has put severe restrictions on the violence allowed even during a just war of self defence. All jihadist terrorist organisations of the day violate these injunctions, by calling them either non-feasible in modern times or by sacrilegiously claiming that these injunctions have been removed or abrogated.

The Quran clearly states that Muslims are only supposed to fight those people who violently attack them and not anybody else. It also states that self defence is not a licence to unmitigated violence.

> Fight in the way of Allah only those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors.[28]
>
> —Quran 2:190

The Quran also calls on Muslims to accept peace whenever the adversary calls for it, even if the offer is strategically untimely and asks believers to trust in God for a favourable outcome as war is only a necessary evil and must be avoided whenever possible.

> If they resort to peace so shall you, and put your trust in God. He is the Hearer, the Omniscient.
>
> —Quran 8:61

Another verse of the Quran, reiterates this message:

> If they withdraw from you, and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then God assigns no excuse for you against them.
>
> —Quran 4:90

• Islam prohibits war for conversion, enjoins freedom of conscience: In stark contrast to the intolerant views and coercive practices of Muslim extremists, the Quran is categorical in its assertion that every human being has freedom to believe or practice his or her ideological or religious beliefs. Thus, it clearly states

> There is no compulsion in faith,
> —Quran (2:256)

In fact, Islam states that God has not only given freedom but authority to all humans to live their lives the way they want. People will be held accountable on the Day of Judgement for their choices and the way they exercised their autonomy but, in this world, human beings have been given the freedom to choose. According to the Quran, God has given the freedom of choice and the power of decision, so "even in such an important matter as belief, discretionary power has been given to human beings by God Himself".[29]

> Whoever wishes, they can believe and whoever wants, they can disbelieve
> —Quran, 18:29

This freedom of choice also extends to the realm of politics. According to Islamic scholar Javed Ghamidi and even more hardline exponents such as Israr Ahmad, the only indication of a recommended political system in Islam is democracy and not monarchy. This is because the Quran states:

> Their (the rightly guided) affairs are based on their mutual consultation.
> —Quran, 42:38

Even the Prophet supported consultation and according to Sunni Islam, the early rightly guided Caliphs were elected on the basis of consultation among the religious and tribal elite, a system closer to democratic practice than a system of monarchy.

Even Al-Qaeda's favourite medieval scholar Taqiuddin Ibn Taymiyyah, whom it repeatedly mispresents and misquotes in its texts, writes a beautiful passage refuting any religious justification for going to war to spread Islam.

> For the majority of the Salaf (the early community of believers, whom Salafi jihadists purportedly follow) the Quranic verse ['There is no compulsion in faith' 2:256] is neither abrogated nor restricted. It is a definitive statement that is general in its meaning, that we do not compel anyone to embrace a religion. And in fact fighting is only against those who initiate war against us, and even if they don't accept Islam, their property and lives are safe, and if these people are not combatants we do not fight them. No-one can narrate that the prophet ever forced anyone to embrace Islam … there is no benefit in Islam in any such conversion.[30]

• **Terrorism and killing of civilians, non-combatants prohibited:** Islam is strictly opposed to the killing of people for creating fear and terror in society or to coerce any government for any purpose. There are several references in the Islamic scriptures against such violence, particularly the indiscriminate killing of innocent people, civilians and non-combatants.

> Whoever kills an innocent human being, it shall be as if has killed all mankind, and whosoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind.
>
> —Quran 5:32

According to Hadith literature, the Prophet instructed his soldiers not to slay non-combatants.

> When you set out for war, do not lay hands on the old verging on death, on women, children and babes. Do good, for Allah loves the virtuous and the pious.[31]
>
> —Prophet Muhammad

According to one hadith ('reported speech of the Prophet'), the killing of women and children is forbidden in Islam, even during war.

> It is narrated by Ibn 'Umar that a woman was found killed in one of the battles; so the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) forbade the killing of women and children.[32]
>
> —Sahih Muslim (19:4320)

> Narated By Ibn Umar: 'During some of the wars a woman was found killed, so Allah's Messenger forbade the killing of women and children'.
>
> —Sahih Bukhari (4:52:258)180

In another Hadith recorded in the collections of Sahih Muslim, the Prophet also instructed soldiers not to mutilate the dead bodies of slain soldiers during war.

> Do not embezzle the spoils; do not break your pledge (with enemies); and do not mutilate (the dead) bodies; do not kill the children.[33]
>
> —Prophet Muhammad

According to Hadith volume by Muslim, Anas Ibn Malik reports that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) forbade the killing of women and children.[34] [Muslim: 4320]. In another reference, Rabah ibn Rabee' says he left in an expedition with the prophet (peace be upon him), who went up to Khalid ibn Walid [his general] and said "Do not kill the workers/wage earners [i.e., those workers not fighting you]".[35]

The lifelong friend of the Holy Prophet and the first Caliph of Islam, Sayyedna Abu Bakr told his soldiers this message when they went to battle:

> Stop O people, that I may give you ten rules for your guidance in the battlefield. Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor

a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful. Slay not any of the enemy's flock, save for your food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them alone.[36]

—The First Caliph Abu Bakr

• **Humanitarian treatment of prisoners of war:** The Holy Quran states that prisoners, particularly prisoners of war, should be treated with great compassion. Thus, it states:

> And they give food, in spite of their love for it (or for the love of Him), to the Miskeen (the poor), the orphan, and the captive, (Saying): 'We feed you seeking Allah's Countenance only. We wish for no reward, nor thanks from you'.
>
> —Quran 76:8-9

According to one Hadith preserved in Ibn Katheer's *Tafsir*, it is stated:

> On the day of war of Badr, the Messenger of God (may peace be upon him) commanded them to be kind to their prisoners, so they used to put them before themselves when it came to food … Mujahid said, this refers to the one who is detained, i.e., they would give food to these prisoners even though they themselves desired it and loved it.
>
> —Tafsir ibn Kathir: Al-Insan[37]

Similar kind of mercy is extended to refugees:

> If one amongst the non-believers asks thee for asylum, grant it to him, so that he may hear the word of God; and then escort him to where he can be secure.
>
> —Holy Quran 9:6

• **Islam is not a political system but religion:** Unlike modern advocates of political Islam and Salafi-jihadism—such as Muslim Brotherhood,

Al-Qaeda, ISIS, etc.—majority of Islamic scholars around the world assert that the basic purpose of Islam as a religion is to purify the human soul and to enable a person to worship and serve God as His true subject and servant.

Scholars like Javed Ghamidi even opine that 'the 'qîtal'done by the Prophet and his companions was essentially and for most part a form of divine punishment against divinely specified peoples for denying the truth of the Prophet's message and position after this truth had become evident to them.

'Thus, this form of jihad ended with the Prophet and his companions, and the only valid moral basis for qital now is to end oppression and injustice. Jihad (as qîtal) cannot be waged to propagate religion or merely to eradicate a non-Islamic 'system'.[38] This leaves no room for waging war for military conquest of the world for forging a Global Caliphate.

• **Only a Ruler/Government can declare and wage war:** According to classical Islamic legal sources, only the head of a Muslim state (an Amir or Khalifa) has the right to declare war after having exhausted all possible means (political, diplomatic, legal, etc.) for avoiding war. No individual or militant group (such as Al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba, etc.) has the right to declare or wage jihad.

The Prophet has stated that the right to declare and wage war solely rests with the ruler, whose decision has to be followed even if he is of bad character. Thus, there can be no justification for non-state actors to either declare war on their own or mutiny against the ruler's decision to go to war. Thus the Prophet has said:

> War becomes obligatory only on the declaration of the ruler (Amir), whether he be pious or a sinner.[39]
>
> —Prophet Muhammad

Thus, the prerogative for violence solely rests with the ruler (or head of state) and although the concept of nation state had not come into existence at the time of the Prophet, the exclusive right of the state personified in the ruler to establish and wage war is clearly enshrined. In another Hadith, the Prophet further establishes this right of the ruler:

Anyone who fights for the sake of God, obeys the ruler (Amir), spends money and abstains from 'fasad' (causing evil or strife) in the land he will be rewarded.

—Prophet Muhammad

There is no permission given to non-state actors or private militias to operate according to Islam. It is ironic that many Pakistani scholars of Islam, who earlier religiously endorsed the existence of violent non-state actors have started coming around this Islamic injunction and have declared violent non-state actors as anti-Islam, albeit they still give a devious allowance to anti-India terror groups like Jaish-e-Muhammad, Hizbul Mujahideen, etc.

• **Jihad (in its exceptional connotation of warfare) not essential duty:** The declaration of jihad (in its exceptional connotation of 'qital' or defensive war) is enshrined in Islamic jurisprudence as 'fardkifayah'[40] (occasional and collective duty). The classical example of 'fardkifayah' is the funeral procession and prayer (janaza): the individual is not required to perform unless there are enough people to fulfil the duty.

Only when a ruler finds war unavoidable, after having exhausted all political, diplomatic and other non-violent means for avoiding it, that he is allowed only on its declaration by the ruler of a country. It is not the essential duty or act of worship of every Muslim to be performed individually like salah/namaz (ceremonial prayer), swam/roza (fasting), etc. that is mandatory for every Muslim individually and at all times, the way some wayward militant organisations like Al-Qaeda and ISIS argue based on Mohammad Farag's book *The Neglected Duty*. The stricture that warfare id 'fardkifaya' (only when the occasion arises and to be conducted by military) is enshrined in all schools of Islamic jurisprudence.

• **Violent non-state actors, asymmetric warfare, lone wolf operators prohibited:** Salafi-jihadist ideologues of the 20th century turned against their own governments and declared their aggressive version of jihad as an individual duty ('fard al-ayn') of every Muslim and not that of the head of state, with the consequence that it has given rise to self-styled jihadi groups and violent non-state actors, sleeper cells, lone wolf operators, suicide bombers and leaderless assailants.

In addition, their deviance from classical Islamic jurisprudence of declaring jihad 'fard al ayn' has made participation in war obligatory for every Muslim man, unlike 'fardkifaya' that delegates this duty to state military. Thus, Islamic "jurists often reject this idea of jihad being an individual obligation by noting that the Prophet himself did not participate in certain military expeditions he dispatched and that it would be unthinkable for the Prophet to forgo an individual obligation."[41]

In fact, the Prophet did not resort to violence until the time he had himself become the head of the state of Medina and headed a conventional army. In the first 13 years of Islamic history, the Prophet propagated his religion in Mecca and his followers suffered the worst forms of killings, torture and persecution. However, *he did not allow any Muslim the right of self-defence*. It is only after his migration to Medina, where he became head of state and when Mecca economically strangled and then attacked Medina that the permission to go to war was granted.

By that time Muslim forces had gained symmetry in military power because of which they prevailed in the battles of Badr, Uhud and Khandaq although the wars were imposed on them. The Prophet never resorted to asymmetric warfare (sub-conventional, unconventional guerrilla, irregular or worse), as he was divinely guided against resorting to the evil of such diabolical warfare.

Thus, there is no precedent set by the Prophet for asymmetric forms of war in Islam. In fact, it was only the outlawed and excommunicated Khawarij sect that assassinated the fourth Caliph Ali that first used guerilla warfare in Islamic history.

This account is narrated by most Islamic scholars who have opposed private militias and VNSA as they perpetrate 'fasad' (civil strife and anarchy).[42]

Perhaps, one of the best Islamic references against terrorism by private militias and lone wolf terrorism comes from the oft quoted Hadith:

A perfect Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands mankind is safe.[43]

• Nation-states based on geography, culture are recognised by Islam: Terrorist organisations have concocted the absurd premise that Islam does not recognise national identities based on geographical regions, ethnicities and language-based communities. Thus, they keep harping on religion-based polity as opposed to the natural affinity of people toward their land and culture, which they consider their nation, and out of which the concept of modern nation-state as opposed to the empires of the past has emerged.

It is surprising that the Holy Quran does not invalidate the idea of nationhood among humans that surpasses their spiritual orientation. In fact, it celebrates the diversity of nations, ethnicities and tribes in mankind and is not against the formation of nations based on their geographical, cultural, ethnic and distinctive ways of life.

> O you people! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes that ye may recognize each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is who is the most righteous of you.
>
> —Quran (49:13)

Even the Constitution of Madina ('Mithaq-al-Madina') that the Prophet drafted after negotiation with all the religiously and ethnically diverse tribes of Medina, explicitly refers to equal rights of Jewish, Christians and polytheists as equal citizens of Medina and calls them members of the 'Ummah' (which in fact refers to the citizenry of Muhammad's state of Madina).[44]

Again, Islam is a religion and not a political system, as is misunderstood by Maududi and other Islamist ideologues. Its religious scriptures (Quran and Hadith) are not political treatises recommending any political system or ideology, but are highly spiritual and sublime texts. Thus, religion-based nation-state has no religious injunction in Islam.

It is important to note that in the early days of the Muslim community, the freedom to practice one religion was not granted in various kingdoms and empires of the times. It was at that time that

Muslim jurists had divided the world into three categories, based on territorial jurisdiction: *'dar al Islam'* ('territory of Islam' where there is Muslim rule and Muslims can practice their religion), *'dar al harb'* ('territory of war' or hostile territory, where Muslims are not allowed to practice their religion) and *'dar al aman'* ('territory of peace and conciliation' where there is agreement between Muslims and non-Muslims that freedom of religion will be given to all communities).

In India, as in most countries of the world today, all religions are allowed to practice their religions, which makes these countries 'dar-al-aman' (a land of peace where Muslim violence or insurrection against the state is forbidden). According to Islam, it is not allowed to wage war against 'dar-al-aman'. It should be noted here that the Darul Uloom of Deoband in 2009 issued a fatwa calling India 'dar al-aman'.[45]

• **Constitution of Medina against Pakistan's Two-Nation Theory:** The founders of Pakistan claimed that Muslims of India were a separate people from other communities of India, on the basis of their religious belief and outlook. However, there is no basis for this argument even from the Islam's point of view.

If the Holy Prophet could draft a constitution enshrining equal rights of citizens in the Constitution of Medina (Mithak-e-Madina), how can Pakistan's two-nation theory be deemed religiously valid? The great Deobandi freedom fighter and 'Sadr-i-Madaris' (head of Darul Uloom Deoband), Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani (1879-1957) had made the Constitution of Medina his principal ideological concept for forging Hindu-Muslim unity and support for the Indian constitution and opposed the formation of Pakistan. "Our religion tells us that Adam descended in India. He inhabited this land and it was from here that his race spread … It is necessary for the Muslim to understand that this country is his ancient home".[46] Thus, he sanctified the land and nation of India, which Muslims should safeguard and develop.

• **Caliphate not a recommended religious panacea:** Curiously, the word Khilfah or Caliphate is not referred to in the sense of an Islamic empire, either in the Quran or the Hadith. According to Sunni Islam (to which most Salfi-jihadi and Deobandi groups belong),

the prophet did not appoint his political successor or any Khalifa. Even during the times of the four rightly guided Caliphs (Khulfa-e-Rashidun), there was great 'fitan' (infighting and civil war as well as famine). Therefore, reverting to the early Caliphate rule has little religious sanction or validity. Thus, the idea of going back to the times of the Caliphate, as envisioned by most political and militant Islamists, is a non-religious and pointless prescription.

• **The deceptive use of the term 'Ghazwa-e-Hind':** The verses of the Holy Quran are considered to be the revealed words of Allah, unlike Hadith literature which constitutes the personal sayings of Prophet Muhammad. Unlike Quran, which was preserved with great care during the time of the Prophet, the sayings of the Prophet were collected many years after his death as his companions recollected from their memory. Therefore, Hadith literature cannot be taken as being as reliable as Quran.

Even the collectors of the Hadith have differentiated their Hadith sayings, according to the degree of reliability of narrators in the chain of their transmission. In regards to future events nearing the prophecised end of the world, there are certain prophecies in Hadith literature (which are highly abstruse and difficult to interpret as well as of varying degrees of narrative reliability) that a few refer to Ghzwatul Hind or Ghazwa-e-Hind (as regards a prophesized 'war with India').

According to these Hadith, these wars will be fought in India by the contingent sent by Imam Mahdi and Jesus Christ (during his 'second coming' on earth) while fighting against the anti-Christ (dajjal) who would have conquered much of the world, including India, by then. Therefore, the Ghazwa (or war) of Hind (India) would be fought to free the land from the control of the anti-Christ.

Thus one version of the Hadith says, "The Messenger of Allah said: 'There are two groups of my community whom Allah will free from the Fire: The group that fights for India, and the group that will be with Isa bin Maryam, peace be upon him'" Here, the reference is about the forces that will fight with Jesus Christ. In another Hadith, it is said: "Abu Hurairah quoted the Prophet as saying, "[d]efinitely, one of your troops would do a war in India. Allah would grant

success to those warriors, as far as they would bring their kings in chains. And Allah would forgive those warriors (by the Blessing of this Great War). And when those Muslims would return, they would find Isa Ibn Maryam [Jesus] in Syria".

Here the reference is clearly to a war led by Jesus Christ on his 'Second Coming' (i.e. the Islamic version of it). As none of these people and events are present today, it is pointless to talk about the term, 'Ghazwa-e-Hind' in our times. But Pakistani leaders and religious extremists use the bogey of 'Ghazwa-e-Hind' to justify and radicalise their mercenaries in the name of a minor and distorted Hadith references to wage a war against India. Interestingly, Al-Qaeda and ISIS justify their attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan also as part of their 'Ghazwa-e-Hind' campaign, as they believe the Af-Pak region also comes in the region of Hind (as was envisaged during Prophet's times).

• **Controversy created around 'Sword Verse':** Sometimes, radical Islamist ideologues make ridiculous claims that all the verses of peace advocated in the Holy Quran have been abrogated and annulled and only the so-called Sword Verse (Surah 9, Verse 5), which is then wrongly interpreted by radicals, is the valid verse on militant jihad. The verse in reference is:

> When the Sacred Months have passed, kill the polytheists wherever you find them. And capture them, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every ambush. But if they repent, and perform the prayers, and pay the alms, then let them go their way. God is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.
>
> —Quran 9:5

Surprisingly this verse has been used by all so-called jihadists of our times as a licence for eternal jihad against non-Muslims, when the very first clause speaks of 'Sacred Months' that clearly refers to a context in which the verse was revealed. This context was the sacred month for the pilgrimage of Haj, during which Muslims were attacked but they were asked to refrain from self-defence. The verse only calls for responding to the hostilities after the holy months have passed,

and even then calls on Muslims to let those who have violated the Peace Treaty of Hudaybiah (the time when the verses were revealed) if they too offer their pilgrimage, pray and give alms, etc.

Again, the claim about the abrogation of the peaceful verses referred to earlier has been vehemently refuted by a large number of eminent Islamic jurists and scholars including, Imam Razi in his book *Mafatih al-Ghayb*; Imam Jamal in *Hashiyat al-Jalalayn*; Imam Zamakhshari in *Kashshaf*; Imam Baydawi in *Anwar al-Tanzil*; Imam Nasafi in *Madarik al-Tanzil*; Imam Biqa'i in *Nadhm al-Durar*.[47] In fact, the verse directly following the so-called 'Sword Verse' and is contextually linked to it further establishes the Quranic spirit of love and forgiveness.

> And if anyone of the polytheists asks you for protection, give him protection so that he may hear the Word of God; then escort him to his place of safety.
>
> —Quran 9:6

Therefore, to base an entire campaign of eternal war with non-Muslims employing brutality and inhuman killing based on the so-called 'Sword Verse' (by ignoring all the other peaceful verses), where even the verse quoted calls for action in self defence only after the sacred months and then urges Muslims to show extreme compassion to adversaries at war, followed by instruction of giving them asylum and safe passage of return does not validate any of the justification that terror groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS use to carry out their inhuman acts.

Condemnation of ISIS by Islamic Scholars, Institutions

In addition, this list is by no way exhaustive and there are many religious scholars, institutions, seminaries and organisations involved in developing counter-narratives. We need to highlight the number of Islamic scholars, institutions and seminaries that condemn global terrorism, particularly Al-Qaeda and ISIS.

On September 12, 2001 (that is, in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks), a total of 46 of the most noted Islamic scholars

and heads of religious institutions from around the world signed a letter that categorically condemned Al-Qaeda's terrorist strikes against the US.

These included scholars of not only the so-called Vatican of Sunni Islam (Al Azhar University in Cairo), but also leaders of Muslim Brotherhood and scholars from Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Sudan.

The language and contents of the letter should be used as a clear Muslim counter-narrative denouncing terror.

"In the Name of Allah, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful [1]

A CLEAR CRITERION [BAYAN]
by
The Scholars and Leaders of Islamic Movements on the Attacks which Targeted the U.S.

The undersigned, leaders of Islamic movements, are horrified (ra'ahum) by the events of Tuesday 11 Sept 2001 in the United States which resulted in massive killing (qatl), destruction (tadmeer) and attack (i'tida) on innocent lives.

We express our deepest sympathies and sorrow. We condemn, in the strongest terms, the incidents (hawadith; word shared with Hebrew in 'hadasah') which are against all human and Islamic norms. This is grounded in the Noble Laws of Islam which forbid all forms of attacks on innocents. God Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an: 'No bearer of burdens can bear the burden [wizr] of another' (Surah al-Isra 17:15). [2] …

… We wish to convey our sincerest condolences to the families of the innocent victims and the American people.

24 Jumada al-Akhirah 1422 AH
12 Sept 2001 AD"[48]

Two days later, Shaykh Muhammed Sayyid al-Tantawi, Grand Imam of Al Azhar Mosque (considered the Vatican of Sunni Islam), issued a withering attack against terrorism in the name of Islam:

> Attacking innocent people is not courageous, it is unintelligent and will be punished on the Day of Judgement. … It's not courageous to attack innocent children, women and civilians. It is courageous to protect freedom, it is courageous to defend oneself and not to attack.[49]

A week later he issued another categorical statement condemning terrorism. "Al-Azhar is against terrorism, regardless of its source or target. The killing of innocent men, women, and children is a horrible and ugly act that is against all religions and against rational thinking."[50]

Again on September 27, 2001, Tariq Bishri, Egypt; Muhammad S. Awwa, Egypt; Fahmi Huwaydi, Egypt; Haytham Khayyat, Syria; Shaykh Taha Jabir al-Alwani, U.S. categorically denounced terrorism as un-Islamic:

> All Muslims ought to be united against all those who terrorize the innocents, and those who permit the killing of non-combatants. Islam has declared the spilling of blood and the destruction of property as absolute prohibitions until the Day of Judgment. … [It is] necessary to apprehend the true perpetrators of these crimes, as well as those who aid and abet them through incitement, financing or other support. They must be brought to justice in an impartial court of law and [punished] appropriately. … [It is] a duty of Muslims to participate in this effort with all possible means.[51]

Similarly, many prominent Muslim countries and organisations condemned the rise of ISIS as a terrorist group in 2013-24. This condemnation was led by the 'Organisation of Islamic Co-operation',[52] representing 57 countries, when it issued a statement that ISIS had "nothing to do with Islam". Similarly, the Islamic Society of North America condemned the terror group and emphasized that the actions of ISIS were in "in no way representative of what Islam actually teaches"[53]

On August 20, 2014 Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti, Abdul Aziz al ash-Sheikh decried ISIS as "the number-one enemy of Islam".[54] He reiterated, "The ideas of extremism, radicalism and terrorism … have nothing to do with Islam and (their proponents) are the enemy number one of Islam."

In September 2014, more than 120 Islamic scholars co-signed an 18-page 'Open letter to Baghdadi', written in Arabic, containing what the Slate website's Filipa Ioannou described as a "technical point-by-point criticism of ISIS' actions and ideology based on the Quran and classical religious texts."

For his part, Shaykh Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi and the International Union of Muslim Scholars said the "declaration of Islamic state by IS is a fantasy and theologically void."[55] Imams in the UK united against ISIS to say it is "evil and does not represent Islam".[56]

The Group of South African Muslim Scholars condemned the terrorist group by saying: A group called ISIS is presently killing thousands of Muslims in Iraq in the name of Jihad. Some media try to label them as Sunni Muslims and propagating as a conflict between Sunni vs. Shia. But in fact, they are not Sunni Muslims. They are Khwarijites who are the Wahabis—so called Salafis, considered as one of the misguided groups by majority traditional Sunni Muslims.'[57] Renowned Islamic scholar Shaykh Abdul Muhsin Al-Abbad of Indonesia said:

> Muslims are prohibited to follow individuals whose real identity is not known. The ISIS is a deviant group for committing takfir and atrocities against innocents.[58]

Similarly, Shaykh Muhammad Al-Yaqoobi has stated, "The Khilafah State declared (by the ISIS) is illegitimate ... supporting the group is haram (or forbidden) by Islamic law". Shaykh Muhammad ibn Hadee declared the so-called 'jihad' of Al-Qaeda and the ISIS as an evil activity. In his words, "As for these people (ISIS, Al-Qaeda, etc.) they are only callers to 'fitnah' (disorder and mayhem), and that which they call jihad is disorder and mayhem. Whether they like it or not we say it loudly it is disorder and mayhem."[59]

Imam Omar Suleiman has spoken extensively against the ISIS:

> The Prophet (peace be upon him) cared for the innocent men, women and children that belonged to 'the other side' even as he suffered from injustice himself and the loss of his family and closest companions. Despite losing Khadijah (RA) and Hamza (RA) etc.

he never became bitter or unethical. Protecting civilians on all sides is also part of jihad. The oppression of Bashar and Al-Maliki does not justify the taking of an innocent life be it a Muslim, Christian, Yazidi, etc. So I openly condemn the ISIS and speak out against them for the havoc they are wreaking upon the people of Iraq and Syria[60]

Another eminent Islamic religious leader, Imam Syed Sohrawardy has said:

I want to create awareness about the nature of their (ISIS') work—they are using Islam, they are quoting Qur'an, they look like Muslims, they pray like Muslims but they are not Muslim. They are deviant people, and they are doing exactly everything which goes against Islam … This is not jihad, this is terrorism … My focus is Muslim youth, yes, but at the same time creating awareness to all Canadians that we condemn these people as strongly, maybe more strongly, than any other Canadian because they are creating a negative image of my faith—they are creating a negative image of all Muslim communities—and they are betraying us. [61]

Celebrated Islamic scholar Yasir Qadhi, long associated with the Salafi school of Islam, has been one of the strongest opponents of the ISIS and has received death threats from the group. In his words:

The reality of ISIS is becoming more and more clear, except to those who are deluded and too stubborn to see the truth. This group is nothing other than a modern reincarnation of the Kharijites of old. As our Prophet (peace be upon him) said, these groups would have the best of speech, but the worst of actions; they would spread bloodshed wherever they go, even as they think they are the best of worshippers. Anyone who supports or sympathizes with ISIS, unsubscribe from my page now.[62]

The Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR) has warned American Muslims from joining the ISIS. A statement by the organisation reads:

American Muslims view the actions of ISIS as un-Islamic and morally repugnant. No religion condones the murder of civilians, the beheading of religious scholars or the desecration of houses of worship. We condemn the actions of ISIS and reject its assertion that all Muslims are required to pay allegiance to its leader. CAIR strongly urges American imams and other community leaders to continue to speak out against American Muslims traveling abroad to join extremist groups and sectarian militias. While ISIS uses romanticized imagery in its propaganda materials, its human rights abuses on the ground are well-documented.[63]

Hai'ah Al-Sham Al-Islamiyah has given six reasons why the declaration of the Caliphate by the ISIS is illegitimate:

- The declaration of the 'Caliphate' was by a dissident group that practices Takfīr (calling people apostates) and sheds blood as religion in and of itself. This methodology is totally perverted from the example of the Prophet (peace be upon him) who taught the Ummah true leadership and how to establish a noble and upright Khilāfah (Khilāfah Rāshida), exemplified by his companions.
- The absence of the (essential) elements that constitute a 'state', both legally and by what is understood through custom. Even if they truly had authority in the land and prevalence they would have appeared in person. Thus, they are closer to being a gang than a state.
- The unilateral declaration of Khilāfah without the consultation of scholars or the Muslims in general, due to al-Baghdadi's group's belief that they are exclusively the people of Shura while others are apostates or members of 'Sahwas'.
- Such unilateral action totally disregards and undermines the authority of the whole Muslim nation. 'The Second Caliph Umar (RA) said: "Whoever gives the pledge of allegiance to a man without the consultation of the Muslims should not be given the pledge of allegiance, nor should the one who he gave it to out of deception, lest they will both be killed." Ibn Hajar may All h mercy on him said in Fathul-Bāri: 'This means, whoever does this, has deceived himself and his companion, subjecting both to the possibility of being killed.'

- The forcing of people to give al-Baghdadi the pledge of allegiance while it has not been given to them in the first place. They said that "due to the declaration of the Khilāfah it has become incumbent upon all Muslims to swear allegiance to it and to give victory to Ibrahim …" and that 'he has become the leader and Khalīfah of Muslims everywhere!' They added, "whoever wants to cause division should be shot in the head, whoever it may be without dignity".

- The appointment of a completely unknown 'Khalīfah' (apart from his name), not recognised by any scholar nor the masses of his own group let alone the majority of all Muslims, completely disregarding the conditions set out by the scholars that form a leader. This is a form of ridicule towards the Ummah, and is similar to the behaviour of dictatorships.

- The overturning of al-Baghdadi's original commitment of allegiance to his leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri. Previously al-Baghdadi had said: "We owe it to God that you are our governor and upon us is to listen and obey as long as we live." Al-Zawahiri had long issued an instruction to abolish ISIS in Syria. Will treachery, betrayal and failed promises be the first thing the "Khalīfah" of the Muslims gets up to?[64]

To cap it all, 80 Muslim leaders and intellectuals from India have jointly written a letter condemning the ISIS and its violence:

> We strongly condemn such barbarism which is against the teachings of Islam. We express our heart-felt sympathies and solidarity with the survivors of those whose near and dear ones have been mercilessly butchered, and the tens of thousands of Iraq's minorities who have been dispossessed, forced to flee their homes and are now living in extremely difficult circumstances … It is of utmost importance to highlight here that ISIS not only conducts atrocities against minorities, but against everyone who is against their policies, all in the name of Islam. This violence based on the wrong interpretation of Islam is unacceptable … Their brutality is worse than genocide. They are killing women, elderly and children who are respected in Islam. Their conduct is against every teachings of Islam.[65]

There are several eminent Islamic scholars and community leaders whose condemnation of Al-Qaeda, ISIS and other terrorist groups could not be incorporated in this study on account of paucity of space.

There is a lot of religious literature and theological treatises available to demolish the unholy claims of religiosity made by so-called jihadist groups to validate their indiscriminate forms of violence and extremist way of thought. The biggest challenge has been to communicate these ideas effectively to the general Muslim as well as non-Muslim communities so that they do not develop extremist and radical views against each other in a climate of violentconfusion and mis-information available from a variety of sources and mediums.

Notes

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10. Sahih Bukhari, Volume No. 3, Hadith # 2995.

11. Sunnan Baihaqi, Volume No. 8, p. 30.

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7. Doctrinal Deviance of Modern Jihadism

In today's wars, there are no morals ... We do not have to differentiate between military or civilian. As far as we are concerned, they are all targets.

—Osama bin Laden[1]

In contemporary times, jihad is generally understood as a monovalent concept, related only to 'militant violence' or 'armed combat'. However, as our study in the previous chapter shows that even when the term in Islamic jurisprudence is applied to armed combat (only in exceptional circumstances according to early Islamic scholarship), it came with a series of conditions and an ethical code of military engagement.

However, with the advent of the 20th century, a new movement of deviant Islamist ideologues sought to alter the Sunni jurisprudential position of pristine jihad, which emphasized its defensive character. These ideologues are not from the 'ulema' (religious scholars) of orthodox Islam, but radical modern 'mujahideen' that seek to rewrite a new jihad theory that legitimises their asymmetric form of warfare (which includes terrorism and ethnic cleansing) to defeat the imperial West.

Thus, in the words of David Cook:

The emphasis in contemporary jihad, at least as it is manifested among radical Muslims, is upon functionality rather than legality … Whereas traditionally authority in Sunni Islam was held by

the *'ulema'*, even in matters of jihad, today few of the *'ulema'*
are actively members of radical groups … *Mujahidin* increasingly
see themselves as the arbiters of what is right and what is wrong
in jihad, and feel that their position as the staunchest defenders
of Islam gives them the authority that the court *ulema'* have
abdicated.[2]

Not surprisingly, this deviance has emerged from the fairly recent
reformist movement of Salafi-jihadism, which does not recognise any
of the orthodox schools of Sunni jurisprudence (Hanafai, Malaki,
Shafai and Hanbali), although it ironically claims to be opposed to
all forms of innovation ('bida'a') in matters of religion.

Among its chief ideological exponents are mostly former
journalists, engineers and doctors, such as Syed Qutb, Muhammad
Faraj, Abdullah Azzam, Abu Musab Al-Suri, Osama bin Laden,
Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, etc. Each one of these ideologues has
introduced or brandished a new radical concept of warfare, seeking
to validate a hitherto proscribed form of violence in Islamic warfare.

Thus, the formulation of this ideological construct—which is
more of an upshot of colonial and post-colonial geopolitics, wars
and occupation than of any theological concern—exploits and
distorts terms of classical jihad theory to wage a transnational and
asymmetric form of warfare against the entire modern international
order. Currently known by the coinage 'jihadist salafism',[3] this 20th
century ultra-extremist ideology is condemned outright by all Islamic
sects and denominations, including the Salafi branch of Sunni Islam
from which the militant movement derives its name.

Thus, it is so-called 'Salafi-jihadism' that has today emerged
as the foremost radical ideology that threatens global security and
dominates almost the entire space of the so-called global jihadist
discourse, barring the contending narratives on 'jihad' by non-state
Shiite militant forces[4] and the Taliban brand of Deobandism, which
it has largely co-opted. It is therefore important to understand that
while mainstream Islamic religious scholarship linked to Islamic
institutions like Al Azhar University or Darul Uloom Deoband are
opposed to the so-called modern 'jihadist' argument, the latter seek
to find material in classical Islamic jurisprudence to suit their agenda,

or invent exceptions to the rule. This deviant interpretation of jihad needs to be opposed through effective counter-narrative campaigns against ongoing jihadist radicalisation.

For this purpose it is important to first understand the orthodox Islamic jurisprudential position on jihad as well as the deviance of the 'jihadist' narrative that has evolved mainly over the last century, through the discourses of aforementioned ideologues. This ideological narrative termed as Salafi-jihadism has distorted old religious terms, including 'tawhid' (the oneness of godhead), 'al wala al bara' (understanding of what God approves and disapproves), 'hijra' (call to people to migrate to evade persecution), 'hakimiyya' (sovereignty of God) and 'al-khilafah' (the spiritual leadership of Muslim community). It has also introduced hitherto unknown or forbidden concepts of 'takfir' (killing of people on account of their rejecting radical version of 'tawhid), 'tawahhush' (sanctioning of brutality as legitmate warfare), 'nikaya' (deliberate attempt to create chaos and disorder in enemy territory) and 'al malahama' (initiate prophesized apocalyptic war with the world), which are being used for propaganda, radicalisation and recruitment campaigns.

Thus, this chapter attempts to understand the peaceful and spiritual teachings of Islam, according to which 'jihad' was understood in the context of spiritual struggle, patience and fortitude, vis-à-vis the evolution of its deviant and violent misrepresentation by contemporary Muslim terrorist groups to then disseminate that information in counter-narrative campaigns. It is to be noted that the study would concentrate on the theory of jihad in Islamic jurisprudence and not on the practice of Muslim rulers over spans of Islamic history in their occasional invocation of jihad for political and imperialist purposes.

The Meaning of Jihad

However, before studying the Salafist-jihadi discourse it would be important to first understand the concept of jihad in itself and the normative Islamic jurisprudential stipulations regarding its validity when connoting military warfare.

This chapter merely concentrates on the doctrinal aspects of jihad and its reinterpretation by Salafi-jihadists and their deviance from its normative understanding. It does not study or attempt to justify the manner in which wars in the name of 'jihad' might have been conducted by Muslim rulers in practice throughout Islamic history. The real meaning of the term 'jihad' in Islam has been the subject of much controversy both among Islamic theologians and non-Muslim scholars of Islam in recent decades.

The term 'Jihād' is derived from the Arabic root word 'jahada', which means 'to exert' or 'to strive'.[5] The term does not mean 'holy war', as is misinterpreted in recent times, which would translate in the Arabic language as 'al-harb al-muqaddassah'. However, such a term is not found in Quran or Hadith literature.[6]

In its normative usage, 'jihad' connotes the struggle against evil—be it at the spiritual or temporal levels. In fact, 17 derivatives of jihād occur 41 times in 11 Meccan texts and 30 Medinan ones of the Quran, with the following five meanings: striving because of religious belief (21 times), striving decently with non-Muslim parents to hold on to Islam even as they exert pressure to abandon the faith (twice), striving to fulfil solemn oaths (five times), and striving to maintain physical strength (once).[7]

Striving in war only occurs 12 times, but even here the Quran instructs Muslims to take up arms only in self-defence and cease violence when the adversary calls for peace.[8]

Even the often misunderstood 'Verses of the Sword' are in the context of the violation of the Treaty of Hudaybiah and the Battle of Tabuk where a peace emissary was killed and are contextual in nature. In addition, Verse 39 of Surat al-Hajj grants permission to fight only those who have been attacked, while Verse 190 of Surat al-Baqarah, states, "fight in the cause of Allah those that fight you, but do not aggress because Allah does not love the aggressor".[9]

In Islam, Muslims need to conduct Jihad not for personal gain but in the cause of Allah, which entails compliance with restrictive rules of engagement and code of conduct.

This concept is imbued in the Quranic term 'jihad fi sabilillah' ('to strive in the way of Allah').[10] In fact, war is not permissible in

Islamic jurisprudence unless it is declared by the ruler (Imam),[11] who then needs to end war at the first offer of peace by the adversary even if strategically inconvenient,[12] and warfare should not involve killing of non-combatants.[13]

According to Hadith literature, the Prophet described 'jihad' differently on various occasions. Thus, one Hadith quotes him as saying: "The best Jihad is to speak the word of justice in front of an oppressive ruler.[14] Thus, he warned against armed rebellion against the ruler of one's country.

In another Hadith he reportedly calls supporting elderly parents as the best form of jihad.[15] There is also a Hadith that states the highest kind of jihad is conducted by "The person who is killed whilst spilling the last of his blood (against a foreign enemy in defensive combat)".[16]

From the time of the Prophet to this day, Islamic scholars have categorised Jihad into various types and categories—peaceful and combative, individual and collective, spiritual as well as intellectual, political/diplomatic as well as militaristic, etc.

Jihad Originally Linked to 'Striving' not 'War'—(7th to 10th c.)

In her research paper 'Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought and History'[17] Asma Afsuruddin states that the earliest Islamic scholars understood the interdiction in Quran for not committing aggression as "God does not love aggressors", as a clear and general prohibition against initiating hostilities under any circumstance.

Therefore, she cites early Qur'an exegete Mujahid b. Jabr (death 722 AD) who believed that Muslims should not fight until the other side commences fighting.[18] In fact, early theologians like Ibn Abbas, Muqatil bin Sulayman, Abi Rabah and Shiite Al Qummi spoke of immunity of non-combatants as well as defensive jihad as the normative Islamic position. Another early scholar, Muqatil b. Sulayman (d. 150/767), believed that the permission to engage an enemy in fighting in 7th century Arabia was clearly contingent upon its having initiated hostilities.[19]

Even the famous Andalusian philosopher and polymath Ibn Rushd—illustrated in Raphael's famous 'School of Athens' painting

as Averroes—divided jihad into four categories:[20] Jihad of the heart or struggle against the self (Arabic transliteration—'jihad bil qalb/nafs'—deemed 'jihad al-akbar'[21,22] or the greater jihad), Jihad of the tongue/pen or striving with education, pursuit of knowledge and counsel (*jihad bil lisan/qalam*), Jihad of the hand or development of civil society and material progress (*jihad bil yad*) and Jihad of the sword or combative war (*Jihadun bissayf*, combative war also sometimes called *qital fi sabilillah*—armed combat for sake of God only in exceptional circumstances).[23]

Prominent among the early Islamic scholars was Imam Abu Sufyan al-Thawri, who interpreted jihad even in its militant form as being mainly defensive. Along with other scholars like Ibn Shibrimah, and the founder of the Maliki school of Sunni jurisprudence—Imam Malik bin Anas, jihad (in its connotation of armed combat) is not a principle that determines the nature of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Al Thawri is categorical in stating that "fighting idol-worshippers is not an obligation unless the initiation comes from them." He cites the following verse from the Quran to support his claim: "Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just. Allah only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for (your) Faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong."[24]

Malik ibn Anas "stressed that tolerance should be shown unbelievers, especially scripturaries and advised the Imam to prosecute war only when the inhabitants of the … (non-Muslim lands) came into conflict with Islam".[25]

He supports the claims for maintaining peace with non-Muslims based on the Quran verse: "If they resort to peace so shall you, and put your trust in God. He is the Hearer, the Omniscient."[26]

Siyar: Islamic International Law—10th Century

However, these interpretations began to be challenged by later Islamic theologians around the 10th century, mainly by Al Tabari,

Al Mawardi, Said Al Tanukhi, Abu Bakr Al Sarukhshi and Ibn Qudama during the Abbasid Empire, some of whom were known to be closer to the imperialist elite of the time. These scholars were of the view that the normative position of militant jihad was offensive and not defensive.[27] However, their views were contested by several of their own contemporary and later scholars and jurists like Fakr Al Din Al Razi and Abu Abdullah Al Qurtubi, who stuck to the position of the early Quran exegetes.

It was also around the 10th century that the concept of 'siyar' (Islamic international law) began to evolve with the emergence of the schools of jurisprudence (based on their interpretation of 'Sharia' or divine law as enshrined in Quran and Hadith literature). Siyar covered Islamic laws about nations and the rules governing hostilities, peacemaking, and treatment of foreign nationals. Islamic texts on warfare actually focus on the concepts of just war, typologies of conflicts, treatment of the vanquished, division of spoils, and the upholding of Islamic law, given the travel and exchange between Muslim and non-Muslim territories. A central and recurring theme is that war is to be waged in accordance with religious principle—*bellum pium* (literally, pious war, or war in accordance with God's will) as well as *bellum justum* (just war).[28] The classic volume in this regard is *The Book of the Law of Nations* compiled by Muhammad bin al-Hasan al Shaybani.

It is a precursor to international law that provides many details on the legality, typology, and rules of military engagement, truces, and relations between Muslims and the enemy groups or states that surrounded them in the earliest period of Muslim expansion.[29]

At that point in time, when the concept of the modern nation-state did not exist, Muslim jurists like Imam Abu Hanifah al-Nu'man b. Thabit (d. 150/767) divided the world between 'dar al Islam' (land of Islam) and 'dar al-kufr' (land of non-believers), for the purpose of settling issues related to territorial jurisprudence and not based on hostility.[30]

According to Abu Hanifa, who founded the Hanafi school of Sunni jurisprudence, the division of the world into these jurisprudential zones was important as Muslims who lived in

'Dar al Islam' were protected by Islamic law and came under the jurisdiction of the law of Muslim states. However, for the Muslims who lived outside the Islamic world, their *'ismah* or protection was the responsibility of the states of 'dar al kufr', which implied that if those non-Muslim states violated Muslim rights they will be held responsible in the court of God in the Hereafter. This is what is called

'ismah hi 'l-Islam, that is, protection by virtue of affiliation to Islam. According to the Hanafi school of law, rights of Muslims who live outside the territorial limits of Dar al-Islam will not be enforced by the courts in the Islamic state because these courts cannot exercise their jurisdiction over the territory not under the effective control of the Imam (ruler) of Dar al-Islam.[31]

In contrast to the Hanafi school, the other Sunni schools of jurisprudence, that is the Shafai, Malaki and Hanbali, were of the view that if a non-Muslim resident of a non-Muslim state violated the rights of any Muslim, the wrongdoer can be punished by the courts of the Islamic state if he is captured by Muslims or if he enters the Islamic state. In the domain of the dar al-kufr, states which had peace treaty with dar al-Islam were known as 'dar al-sulh' or 'dar al aman' (domain of truce), whereas the states who were hostile came under 'dar al harb' (domain of war).

These categories were not based on hostilities and there was no theory of perpetual Muslim combative jihad against 'dar al-kufr' as many scholars mistakenly suggest. Thus, the following passage even by eminent Islamic scholar Bernard Lewis has been contested:

> The basis of the obligation of jihad is the universality of the Muslim revelation. God's word and God's message are for all mankind; it is the duty of those who have accepted them to strive (jahada) unceasingly to convert or at least to subjugate those who have not. This obligation is without limit of time or space. It must continue until the whole of the world has either accepted the Islamic faith or submitted to the power of the Islamic state. Until that happens, the world is divided into two: the House of Islam (dar al-Islam), where Muslims rule and the law of Islam prevails; and the House

of War (dar al-harb) the rest of the world. Between the two there is a morally necessary, legally and religiously obligatory state of war, until the final and inevitable triumph of Islam over unbelief.[32]

In response to this view, the words of the Islamic scholar Tariq Ramadan are more apposite:

> The concepts of 'dar al-Islam', 'dar al-harb' and 'dar al-'ahd' were not described in the Qur'an or in the Sunna. In fact they constituted a human attempt, at a moment in history, to describe the world and to provide the Muslim community with a geopolitical scheme that is appropriate to the reality of the time. This reality has completely changed.[33]

It is interesting to note here that even radical classical philosophers, notably Abu Hassan Al-Mawardi (born 1058 AD)—whose book *Al-Ahkam Al-Sultaniyya* (The Laws of Islamic Governance) is read as a sourcebook by several radical groups today—has a pacifist approach on the idea of 'dar-al-islam', when he includes non-hostile non-Muslim territories as part of 'dar-al-Islam' and therefore not appropriate for conducting hostilities:[34] 'The public acts of worship (sha' air) of Islam such as group prayers in mosques and calls for prayers are the criteria by which the Prophet, peace be upon him, differentiated between dar-al-islam and dar-al-harb," Al Mawardi writes.

Expounding this statement, acclaimed Syrian scholar Imam Abu Zakariyya Muhyi 'l-Din al-Nawawi (1233-1277), states: "If a Muslim is able to declare his Islam openly, living in a land dominated by non-Muslims, it is better for him to do so … because by this land becomes 'dar-al-islam' (land of peace)."[35] In fact, by this standard India and all countries of the world fall within the ambit of peace for Muslims today, as almost all allow Muslims to practice their acts of worship. Thus, any place on earth where Muslims could freely practice their faith (which is specified as the ability to perform ritual prayer; the annual fast; the building of mosques; the call to prayer; the wearing of Islamic dress; and the performance of Muslim marriage).[36]

Similarly, Abu Hanifa (the founder of Hanafi school of Sunni jurisprudence that is practiced by most Indian Muslims) was opposed

to the view of state of war with the non-Muslim world and believed that that interest of Muslims may be best served by peace as by war and that any time-bound treaty with the domain of 'dar al-aman' can be extended 'as a contract' with no time restriction.[37]

However, Abu Hanifa's moderate views were challenged Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Idris al-Shafai, the founder of the Shafai school of Sunni jurisprudence, who was of the view that a truce should never last more than a year and a treaty with non-Muslims should never extend more than ten years (*muwadah or musalaha*).[38]

There is also no denying that there were Islamic jurists who were votaries of offensive jihad. Shamsuddin Al-Sharakhsi believed that the objective of jihad was war against non-Muslims to honour the religion and defeat the polytheists. It was a duty not to be neglected by the 'imam' (Muslim leader).[39]

However, the principles of defensive jihad, the prohibition on killing of non-combatants and the principle of resorting to peace as the first resort have remained enshrined in Muslim jurisprudence to the extent that modern Salafi-jihadist ideologues, from Syed Qutb to Bin Laden have had to issue dubious pronouncements (to be discussed at length later) to justify why these injunctions were not applicable in modern times.

Misrepresenation of Ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad Ibn Abdel Wahhab

Although there have always been dissenting voices in Islamic scholarship on the theory of jihad, the consecration of Sunni jurisprudence into four schools (madhaib) enshrining the aforementioned peaceful stipulations, the rules of engagement and conduct of Islamic warfare—strengthened by the concepts of 'taqlid' (blind following) and consecrated with the idea of 'closing of the gates of ijtihad' (the Arabic term being 'insidad bab al ijtihad') by the 10th century—established the aforementioned broad understanding on militant jihad.

The first major challenge to this established understanding of classical militant jihad, came in the wake of the 12th and 13th centuries with the commencement of the Crusades and the sacking of

Baghdad by Mongol forces in 1258, the latter leading to the number of Muslim deaths ranging from 200,000 to a million,[40] including the death of the Caliph Al-Musta'sim by trampling. These threats continued to trouble Muslim kingdoms, like Egyptian Mamluk for decades and posed the most serious military challenge the Islamic world faced since its rise on the global stage in the 7th century.

It is in these conditions that we see the beginnings of 'a new interpretation of jihad',[41] particularly in the works of Syrian scholar Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1358), which had enormous consequences in later centuries. In fact, this 14th century scholar is today best known as being the key inspiration to the assassins of Egyptian president Anwar Al-Sadaat in 1981, the late Osama bin Laden and other jihadist personalities. According to the 9/11 Commission Report: 'Islamist terrorist leaders draw on a long tradition of extreme intolerance within one stream of Islam (a minority tradition), from at least Ibn Taymiyyah.'[42]

Ibn Taymiyyah broke from tradition and started developing and issuing his own religious opinions and fatwas (religious edicts) without following any of the classical schools of Islamic jurisprudence (departing from norms of 'taqlid').[43] He called for reverting to the study of the early adherents of Islam (the Salaf) rather than the classical jurists for legal Islamic references. Thus, Ibn Taymiyyah is considered as one of the earliest founders of the Salafi-jihadist movement in that he is said to have influenced several radical jihadist movements.

Finding the normative rulings on jihad by classical schools of Sunni jurisprudence inadequate to confront contemporary challenges, Ibn Taymiyyah introduced the following changes in the conventional modes of jihad.

Although Ibn Taymiyyah agreed with classical jurists that it is necessary to support and tolerate Muslim rulers, even if they conduct unjust acts on occasions, since their rule is preferable to anarchy, he introduced a caveat by stating that if a Muslim ruler does not strictly impose the Sharia law in his kingdom or if he is incapable of militarily defending the nation, then Muslim subjects are obligated to remove him from power.

Ibn Taymiyyah is also credited with introducing '*takfir*', which means the act of pronouncing a person an infidel thus making it legitimate to kill him. These religious rulings (particularly the famed Mardin fatwa) of Ibn Taymiyyah were issued against Mongol rulers, who had conquered and destroyed the Abbasid Caliphate in 1258. The Mongols then converted to Islam, yet they continued to follow their pre-Islamic Yasha code instead of the Shariah.

Thus, Ibn Taymiah is said to be the founding father of modern-day jihadi Salafism. His insistence on the restoration of Sharia is said to have the germ from which modern-day Islamist thinking arose. His call for rebellion against Muslim rulers gives licence to salafi-jihadist groups to become non-state actors, which is unprecedented in Islamic history.

This line of thinking validates jihad as 'fard al-ayn' (duty of every Muslim to do jihad with or without ruler's consent), a perpetual state of war against non-Islamic world, as opposed to the normative 'fard al-kifaya' (jihad declared solely by the ruler of a state on the grounds of an existential threat). By not following any of the four schools of Sunni jurisprudence (madhaib), Ibn Taymiah predates Wahhabism and by calling to revert to the ways of the Salaf (the first three generations after the Prophet), is considered the first ideologue of radical Salafi ideology. His feted hatred of the Shia community is also said to have influenced hatred among votaries of Salafi jihadism toward other Islamic sects.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Ibn Taymiyyah's ideals on jihad have fascinated modern terrorist groups. The writings of 20th century radical ideologue Syed Qutb were purportedly influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah's thoughts, while Mohammad Farag of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, sentenced to death for assassination of President Sadat, even quoted Ibn Taymiyyah in his justification for the crime. Both Bin Laden and Al Zawahiri often referred to Ibn Taymiyyah in glowing terms, while ISIS calls him 'The Great Sheikh' and invariably mentioned him in almost every issue of its online magazine *Dabiq*.

However, there is a sizeable scholarship on Ibn Taymiyyah which objects to modern jihadist organisations' misrepresentation of the 14th century theologian. Noted scholar Yahya Michot and Hamza

Yusuf Hanson contend that Ibn Taymiyyah is a misunderstood figure and is wrongly accused of being 'the fore-runner of modern jihadism', because extremists deliberately misread him or quote him selectively.

Michot affirms that Ibn Taymiyyah is a moderate, if not a relativist, theologian who believed "what is good in certain circumstances becomes evil in other circumstances",[44] and calls him a subtle intellectual, who is not dogmatic in outlook. He cites Ibn Taymiyyah's famous quote: 'Intelligence does not lie in distinguishing good from bad, but in being able to see the best of two goods and the worst of two evils.'[45]

The scholar states that Ibn Taymiyyah's misunderstood Mardin 'fatwa' was issued against the invading forces of Mongol ruler Ghazan Khan in his time, whom he deemed an apostate because the latter violated peace treaties with fellow Muslim rulers. In issuing his fatwa of 'takfir', Ibn Taymiyyah did not apply the same principle on his own Mameluk rulers, who were no better than Mongols in their adherence to the injunctions of the Shariah. Thus, Ibn Taymiyyah remained a loyal subject of his own rulers, and favoured pragmatism for peace as opposed to pursuing the violent idealism of the modern jihadist. Ahead of his times , he opposed the practice of 'triple talaq', just as he vehemently opposed going to war for the sake of conversion.[46]

The other controversial non-classical Muslim scholar is the 18th century was the Najdi scholar Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab. In fact, his religious ideology widely known as Wahhabism, is often accused of being the ideological cradle for modern-day Islamist terrorism. The important point about Ibn Abdul Wahhab is that though not as intellectually accomplished as Ibn Taymiyyah, he ideologically upholds most of tenets of Ibn Taymiyyah—be it in his rejection of the four classical schools of Sunni jurisprudence, his ideology of 'takfir' (declaring the Sufis, Shiites, Christians and Jews infidels), his opposition to the building of tombs and the invocation of saints as part of intercessory prayers, etc.

But where Ibn Taymiyyah failed to receive social and political support for his cause in his lifetime, Abdul Wahhab was more

successful. He is the religious scholar who gave birth to the militant, political movement of Wahhabism, after forging an alliance with a chieftain of Al-Dirri'yah (in Najd region of Saudi Arabia) named Muhammad Al-Saud in 1744. This led to the formation of the first Saudi state.

According to this pact, Abdul Wahhab provided religious legitimacy to Muhammad Ibn Saud's military conquest of much of the Arabian peninsula, by declaring most tribal chiefs of the region apostate. The new Wahhabi state not only seized control of most of the vast plateau called Najd, but its fanatical horde even took control of the cities of Mecca and Medina in Hejaz, as well as sacked and pillaged the city of Karbala in 1801.

However, many modern scholars today question the criticism of Muhammad Ibn Wahhab and his teachings in some critical quarters as responsible for the rise of modern jihadism. They seek to distinguish practices of the Saudi family from the teachings of Abdul Wahhab. They point out that fault lines in the aforementioned Wahhabi-Saudi alliance became clear very soon after its formation. Thus Mawlana Zameelur Rahman writes:

> Muhammad Ibn Saud's first conquest, the people of al-Dir'iyah and their possessions, met with neither approval nor condemnation from Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Rather than actively supporting or promoting conquest, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab merely acceded to it, hoping that Ibn Saud would get his fell of conquest and then focus on more important matters—those pertaining to religious reform. In fact, as evidence of the lack of religious support this military conquest enjoyed, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab left Ibn Saud's company altogether during his campaign, devoting himself instead to spiritual matters and prayer. This was hardly what one would expect had Ibn Abd al-Wahhab believed that jihad as holy war was intended to be used as a tool for conquest.[47]

Another Western scholar Natana DeLong-Bas argues that "The militant Islam of Osama bin Laden does not have its origins in the teachings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and is not representative of Wahhabi Islam ..." She says Wahhabism has always rejected terrorism from

Abdul Wahhab to Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz and that it was Hasan Al Banna, who founded Muslim Brotherhood who is the real progenitor of global terrorist groups.[48]

Irrespective of the claims in defence of Ibn Taymiyyah and Abdul Wahhab, these fundamentalist and revisionist Muslim theologians undoubtedly departed from the orthodox schools of Islam on many doctrinal issues and introduced threads leading to Islamism and modern-day jihadism. However, it is also true that modern global jihadists selectively quote Ibn Taymiyyah and Abdul Wahhab to legitimise their virulent ideology and forms of warfare. It is important to understand here that both Ibn Taimiyya and Abdul Wahhab never raised a dissenting voice against their own rulers and gave precedence to political pragmatism, even though they were avowed votaries of following the Sharia. Therefore, they were not involved in seditious activities or indiscriminate violence.

Evolution of the 20th century Global Jihadist Narrative

The narrative construct of Salafi jihadism strongly contradicts the humanitarian restrictions imposed by all classical schools of Islamic jurisprudence on the declaration and conduct of war in the name of Islam. The most virulent form of political Islam (or so-called Islamism) particularly since the 20th century AD, it draws ideas for its concepts and methodologies from both Islamic and secular sources, with a view to achieving definitive socio-economic and political goals that are mostly at variance with the religious injunctions enshrined in the classical tomes of Islamic law.

In fact, prominent Salafi jihadist organisations of the day—including Al-Qaeda and ISIS—have developed a revisionist theological, socio-cultural, political and militaristic ideological construct to justify their indiscriminate use of violence for so-called religious causes. With this revised and recalibrated ideological outlook, Salafi jihadism follows a clearly enunciated grand strategy and an end state in a totalitarian end-time Global Caliphate.

This process of building a violently disruptive, transnational, puritanical religious ideology as an antithesis to the 21st century international order with all its concomitant socio-political laws,

values and institutions has mainly evolved over the last century. Though it employs many Islamic terminologies and references, the Salafi-Jihadi movement has been widely condemned as 'un-Islamic' by all schools of Islamic theology, sects and movement, including the Salafi movement of Sunni Islam.

• **Political Pan-Islamism of Hasan Al Banna and Maududi:** Following the dismemberment of the Ottoman Caliphate after World War I (that ruled over much of Arab world and the Balkan states), Hassan al-Banna in Egypt and Syed Abul Ala Maududi in India called for the restoration the Islam's political power based on the principles of Sharia (Islamic law). They blamed the western idea of the separation of religion and politics for the decline of Muslim societies and developed a brand of political Islam, wherein religion was no longer a personal spiritual pursuit, but was projected as a form of socio-political ideology and movement, much like contemporary communism and fascism. It should be noted that in much of medieval Islamic history, Sharia was only sparingly or partially implemented by Muslim rulers around the world.

These revisionist ideologues claimed that the ills of the modern world, such as social and economic inequality, breakdown of family values alongwith sexual promiscuity, materialism and wars could be cured by replacing Western liberal ideals of capitalism, nationalism, communism, etc. with Sharia-based Islamic forms of social and political institutions.

For this purpose, they called on Muslims around the world to view Islam as not just a religion, but as a revolutionary movement of social and political change, which they believed could be brought about by social awareness and political activism that they dubbed as modern-day jihad. They also developed a modern version of jihad to end the foreign occupation of Muslim lands and the re-instatement of the Caliphate. Thus, Hasan Al Banna stated in a lecture in 1958:

> Islam does not recognize geographical boundaries, not does if acknowledge racial and blood differences, considering all Muslims as one Umma. The Muslim Brethren consider this unity as holy

and believe in this union, striving for the joint action of all Muslims and the strengthening of the brotherhood of Islam, declaring that every inch of land inhabited by Muslims is their fatherland …The Muslim Brethren do not oppose every one's working for one's own fatherland. They believe that the caliphate is a symbol of Islamic Union and an indication of the bonds between the nations of Islam. They see the caliphate and its re-establishment as a top priority, subsequently; an association of Muslims people should be set up, which would elect the imam.[49]

However, the clearest enunciation of revolutionary political Islam came from the person who tried to convert a religion into a modern political movement, the India-born Abu Ala Al-Maududi (1903-1979), who influenced both Syed Qutb and later Bin Laden. In his words:

Islam is not the name of a mere 'Religion', nor is Muslim the title of a 'Nation'. The truth is that Islam is a revolutionary ideology which seeks to alter the social order of the entire world and rebuild it in conformity with its own tenets and ideals. 'Muslims' is the title of that 'International Revolutionary Party' organized by Islam to carry out its revolutionary programme. 'Jihad' refers to that revolutionary struggle and utmost exertion which the Islamic Nation/Party brings into play in order to achieve this objective (emphasis added).[50]

To Hassan Al Banna and Maududi, jihad related more to social and political activism, of spreading awareness, staging public demonstrations, etc. rather than the violent terrorism of the day. Still, large section of classical Islamic theologians criticised the two ideologues for introducing political machinations in the realm of religious spirituality and making many Muslims believe that it is their religious duty to strive for an Islamic State.

Most Islamic scholars find Maududi's contention highly problematic in that he claims that the fulfilment of religious dictates is impossible unless and until an Islamic political system comes into existence. It is also said that the concept of 'Umma' has always been understood as a religious and spiritual brotherhood and not a political one. These views have been deemed by many

Muslim theologians as divergent from the normative view of Islamic jurisprudence.[51]

For example, The Deoband Madrassah Movement vehemently opposed Maulana Mududi and his party Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) well before the partition of India. It deemed his writings as sub-scholarly and alleged he was a 'Western agent' who was bent on mutilating the spirit of Islam.[52]

• **Sayyid Qutb's call for offensive jihad against 'jahiliyya' world order:** It has been said that Sayyid Qutb (1900-1966), is the 'philosopher of Islamic terror and godfather ideologue of Al-Qaeda'. A secular man of letters in the 1930s, Qutb's outlook on modernity underwent drastic changes during the World War II. His subsequent stay in the US, from 1948 to 1950 reinforced his belief that Islam is humankind's only refuge from the abyss of Western materialism, which drove both capitalism and communism.

Qutb called for violent and offensive jihad in order to overthrow all secular governments both in the West and Muslim world, including the rule of Gemal Abdel Nasser in his home country, Egypt. He compared modern political systems to the pagan ('jahiliyya') system of pre-Islamic Arabia and called for its replacement with Sharia-based 'true and just Islamic society'. Qutb was arrested for plotting the assassination of President Nasser and executed in 1966, which made the radical ideologue a martyr for violent extremist groups and terrorist organisations.

Qutb borrowed the non-Quranic concept of 'hakimiyya' from Maududi, but worked on it to make it his own. He stressed that sovereignty belonged to God alone, which is a 'divine attribute' that has been stolen by man.[53] He believed that unlike the Sharia human laws and ideologies were erroneous and liable to change, and so man was not permitted to take legal sovereignty from God, as is established in the secular principles of the modern nation state.

In his famous book *Ma'lim fi Al Tariq* (*Milestones Along the Way*) Qutb writes: "Any system in which the final decisions are referred to human beings … deifies human beings by designating others than God as lords over men."[54]

In the words of noted scholar on modern jihadism, A.E. Stahl:

> The true meanings of Jihad has very little to do with Qutb's radical distortion of the term. Yet, due to misunderstandings in, inter alia, the mass media, the true meaning of the word became wrongly associated with Qutb's offensive jihad and wrongly associated with Islam, itself. Only by understanding and accepting the very real distortions of offensive jihad, will people begin to understand how little Qutb's idea has to do with the majority of Muslims and with what Islam truly commands and demands from its followers.[55]

Similarly, Dale C. Eikerman writes, Qutb ultimately 'broke with mainstream Islam' with his adaptation of jihad.[56]

• **Mohammed Farag's assertion of Jihad being 'Essential Duty' (Fard Al Ayn):** Muhammad abd-al-Salam Farag (1954-1982) was a young radical thinker and militant espousing political Islam, who led the Cairo branch of the terrorist group, Al Jihad. He was executed in 1982 for his role in coordinating the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, which was carried out in 1981.

An admirer of Sayyid Qutb, he propagated his message of violent political jihad with his pamphlet, 'The Neglected Obligation' ('al-farida al-ghaiba'),[57] wherein he argued that violent jihad was an essential duty in Islam that stood alongside the five fundamental pillars of worship in Islam—Shahadah (pronouncement of faith), 'Salah' or 'namaz' (celebratory Islamic prayer), 'Sawm' or 'roza' (fasting in the month of Ramadan), 'zakat' (obligatory payment of alms to the Muslim poor) and Haj (at least once in a lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca).

He dismissed the mainstream Islamic belief that inner spiritual cleansing was the greater jihad and claimed the cited Hadith in this regard as a fabricated tradition, and considered jihad as limited to the role of armed combat. He even claimed that jihad was 'fard al ayn' (incumbent on every Muslim for perpetuity) and not the normative 'fard al-kifayah' (to be conducted in time of an existential threat and issued by the ruler). He believed, the immediate targets for violent jihad should be local Muslim regimes that he said did not follow Sharia rule.

He is responsible for coining the term 'near enemy' to describe modern Muslim states, in contrast to 'far enemies' such as the US or Israel.

He quoted the 13th century theologian Ibn Taymiyyah in this regard and approved of even illegitimate forms of violence forbidden in Islamic canon, such as attacking by night (even if it leads to accidentally killing innocents), and felling and burning trees of the infidel.

Thus, Farag introduced many new and deviant concepts in the phraseology of 'jihad' that were hitherto proscribed, such as equating militant jihad as an obligatory form of worship, of it being mandatory on every Muslim, of first targeting Muslim states that are the 'near enemy' and the rejection of all forms of non-violent jihad.[58]

• **Abdullah Azzam and his concept of Non-State 'Transnational Jihad':** The mentor of Bin Laden, Abdullah Azzam is known for introducing non-state militant cadres and transnational 'jihad' and for discounting any talks or negotiations. His famous slogan has been followed by most Salafi-Jihadists since: "Jihad and the rifle alone: no negotiations, no conferences and no dialogues".

Although Muslim kingdoms had collaborated during the Crusades, Abdullah Azzam made jihad trans-national with his contention that "such defense was a global obligation," that "Muslims everywhere were personally bound to take up arms" against invasion on Muslim land anywhere around the world.[59]

He is the person who created legions of multinational mercenaries fighting in the name of Islam around the world. Prior to him, pronouncements of jihad were essentially rhetorical and served more as a religious blessing of wars already declared and organised by kings and countries. But with Azzam, thousands of so-called jihadi legions were recruited, who traveled to be trained and to fight in Afghanistan, what Azzam "called for actually came about'. Although Hadith literature prohibits it, Azzam allowed children to participate in militant jihad without permission from parents and women to join in the fight without permission from their husbands.[60]

Although it was Bin Laden who gave justifications for killing innocent civilians later, the idea came from Azzam. Thus he

dubiously claimed, telling followers that: "Many Muslims know about the Hadith in which the Prophet ordered his companions not to kill any women or children, etc., but very few know that there are exceptions to this case."[61]

• **Bin Laden's fatwa on terrorism as legitimate form of Jihad:** On April 24, 2002, Al-Qaeda released an extended statement (approximately 3,700 words) outlining, for the first time, its religious justification for killing civilians in a total war against the United States, titled 'A Statement from Qaidat Al-Jihad Regarding the Mandates of the Heroes and the Legality of the Operations in New York and Washington.'[62] Al-Qaeda founder Osama Bin Laden listed several conditions which nullify Islam's prohibition against killing of civilians and using terrorism as a ploy to defeat the enemy. These cover,

- The norm of reciprocity (when the aggressor, like the US or Israel in Palestine or Iraq, indulges in killing civilians, Al-Qaeda argues the limitation of not killing civilians becomes invalid for the resistance).
- The inability to distinguish civilians from combatants as the theatre of war today is not restricted to traditional battlefields.
- The role of civilians in aiding the enemy and their responsibility in electing democratic representatives that launch wars against Muslim states.
- Transformation of enemy 'strongholds' that are no longer just military targets but economic centres, like the World Trade Centre, which financially support the military.
- The use of modern weaponry that invariably entails collateral damage.
- The acceptability of killing women and children if the enemy uses them as human shields (called *turs*).
- Enemy's violation of agreements or treaties (like the betrayal of the Sykes-Picot agreement and the creation of Israel) which puts lives of Muslim populations in danger, then the protection of enemy civilians is invalidated.

Bin Laden's defence of terrorism as legitimate form of jihad and his justification for the killing of non-combatants contradicts every injunction of the Islam. It flies in the face of the very clear prohibitions on warfare that the Quran, the Prophet and his companions instructed, detailed in the previous chapter.

• **Abu Musab Al Suri's call for 'leaderless' lone-wolf attacks:** An Al-Qaeda ideologue until 2001 US war on Afghanistan, Abu Musab Al-Suri eventually became critical of Bin Laden's leadership and devised his own theory of 'nizam, la tanzim' (system, without organisation), for jihadism in order to avoid the fate of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. He has sought to give religious sanction to 'disaffiliated jihad' of wanton acts of terrorists through lone wolf operators, who do not need to be affiliated to any jihadist organisation. His online book *Call to Global Islamic Resistance* became a big seller.

The waywardness of indiscriminate violence perpetrated by lone wolf attackers and suicide bombers has been criticised by a large number of Islamic scholars, including Salafi-Wahhabi theologians. The mufti of Saudi Arabia, Shaykh Abd Al Aziz Al Shaikh ruled that lone wolf attacks and suicide bombings do not constitute a form of jihad and they are prohibited in Islam. Simliarly, Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradwi issued a fatwas after 9/11 stating that Muslims in armed combat (qital) were not allowed to kill anybody save the one who is involved in face-to-face confrontation with them.[63]

• **Abu Bakr Naji's book Management of Savagery and the Fiqh Al Dima:** The book *Management of Savagery* by Abu Bakr Naji, published online in 2004, enunciated certain forms of warfare which strictly violate every Islamic ruling. Without even trying to resort to any dubious Islamic reference it unapologetically speaks of carrying out the most brazen acts of 'tawahhush' (savagery), as a mode of warfare in the war of attrition against the West.

Al-Naji calls on the so-called jihadists to carry out a merciless campaign to polarise populations and foment sectarian strife in order to create its own order out of the prevailing chaos. The book states: "The management of savagery can be defined very succinctly as the

management of savage chaos! ... The increase in savagery is not the worst thing that can happen now or (as it has already happened) in the previous decade or those before it. Rather, the most abominable of the levels of savagery is less (abominable) than stability under the order of unbelief." Thus, it states, "We must make this battle very violent, such that death is a heartbeat away, so that the two groups will realize that entering this battle will frequently lead to death."

According to William McCants, fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy and director of the Project on US Relations with the Islamic World at the Brookings Institution, who translated the book into English in 2006, "[The book] provides a roadmap for how to establish a caliphate." McCants adds, "It lays out how to create small pockets of territorial control … and how to move from there to a caliphate. It would not surprise me if the book were popular among the crew in Iraq [ISIS]."[64]

Other analysts, such as Terrence McCoy of the *Washington Post*,[65] former MI-6 agent Alastair Crooke[66] and Lawrence Wright of *The New Yorker* confirm that Naji's book served as a guide for warfare by the ISIS in its military strategy and operations. In the words of Crooke, "The seemingly random violence has a precise purpose: It's aim is to strike huge fear; to break the psychology of a people—and according to reports this is exactly what [it] has succeeded in doing."[67]

The book openly extols the benefits of savagery and claims that brutal killings do not just aim to cause terror, but are also meant to 'polarise' a population on sectarian lines. The violence is intended to cause deep fissures in society and to force people of different persuasions to choose sides and "drag the masses into battle". There is no sanction for this kind of warfare in any Islamic literature.

Although ISIS literature never openly gives credit to Al-Naji's book for its tactics of 'nikaya'—its stated methods for causing anarchy and large-scale violence, it has clearly dittoed the prescriptions given in this popular book among jihadists in its form of warfare. The feature titled 'Hijarah to Khilafah', appearing in the first edition of the ISIS' online magazine *Dabiq*, extols the indiscriminate violence of Zarqawi, including acts of provoking sectarian strife between Sunnis and Shiites:

Shaykh Abu Mus'ab (rahimahullah) implemented the strategy and required tactics to achieve the goal of Khilafah without hesitation. In short, he strived to create as much chaos as possible … using attacks sometimes referred to as operations of 'nikayah' (injury) that focus on causing the enemy death, injury, and damage.

With chaos, he intended to prevent any taghut regime from ever achieving a degree of stability that would enable it to reach a status quo similar to that existing in the Muslim lands ruled for decades by tawaghit. Such a status quo—consisting of powerful intelligence and security agencies—allowed the tawaghit to crush any Islamic movement that tried to only slightly raise its head and whisper its creed.

To achieve maximum chaos, the Shaykh focused on the most effective weapons in the arsenal of the mujahidin for Shaykh Abu Mus'ab (rahimahullah) creating chaos—vehicle bombs, IEDs, and Istishhadiyyin (martyrdom-seekers).

He would order to carry out nikayah operations dozens of times in a dozen areas daily, targeting and killing sometimes hundreds of apostates from the police forces and Rafidah. In addition to that, he tried to force every apostate group present in Iraq into an allout war with Ahlus-Sunnah (Sunnis). So he targeted the Iraqi apostate forces (army, police, and intelligence), the Rafidah (Shia markets, temples, and militias), and the Kurdish secularists (Barzani and Talabani partisans). In his speech titled "Hadha Bayanullin-Nasi wa li Yundharu Bih" (This Is a Declaration for the People That They May Be Warned by It), he threatened war on any Sunni tribe, party, or assembly that would support the crusaders.

Then when some so-called 'Islamists' entered into the democratic political process—ignoring what it entails of clearcut major 'shirk' (worshipping someone besides Allah)—he officially declared war on them in his speech titled 'Wa li Tastabina Sabilul-Mujrimin' (And Thus the Way of the Criminals Becomes Evident).[68]

Later, *Dabiq* states how after Al-Zarqawi, the leadership of the group practised the same methodology of creating widespread chaos and anarchy to eventually create the Khilafah.

Thus, Naji's book details the way barbarity can be used to weaken adversaries in a protracted war of attrition. Following the example of Mongol hordes in the medieval ages, Naji sanctions the

use of worse forms of barbarity, including ethnic cleansing, which was never allowed in conventional norms of militant 'jihad'.[69]

Another treatise written by Abu Abdullah Al Muhajir is a 569-page text 'Fiqh Al Dima', which was used by ISIS that legitimises the inhuman and un-Islamic practices of the mutilation of corpses, the trade in human organs, beheading, the killing of children along with 'scorched earth operations' and global terrorist attacks.[70]

Thus, ISIS introduced new forms of barbarity, which cannot claim to be approved in any canon of human morality, let alone Islamic religious texts.

• **ISIS' Apocalyptic Claim, the Caliphate of the End-Times:** Although Al-Qaeda was waging a political war against the West, ISIS introduced the apocalyptic narrative in the jihadist discourse. By calling its proto-state a seed Caliphate, it said the group would unleash the 'Malahamal Kubra' (an end-time war prophesized in Hadith literature), which would usher in the rule of the promised Mahdi and the prophesized Messiah.[71]

In fact, ISIS named its online magazines based on two cities that have apocalyptic significance in Islamic eschatology, *Dabiq* and *Rumaiiyyah*. According to Islamic religious teachings, it is wrong to speculate about the future and even Hadith literature speaking about future occurrences have mystical overtones and cannot be taken at face value.

However, ISIS by calling itself a righteous Caliphate got itself into a trap because according to Hadith literature, a rightly guided Caliphate would only be formed before the coming of the end-time Mahdi and the apocalyptic wars. It is for this reason that ISIS started projecting itself as the prophesized end-time Caliphate, awaiting the Mahdi to lead it to the apocalypse against the crusading West, as prophesized.

It is for this reason that ISIS is obsessed with attacking the Vatican and starting a war with Christianity. Its propaganda literature is replete with references to 'Ilmu Akhiru Zaman' (Islamic Knowledge of the End Times), similar to some extreme apocalyptic, mass suicide-prone Western cults of the 20th century.

It is precisely for this reason that ISIS attacks Christians worldwide, as it tries to anticipate in its own imagination, the prophesized apocalyptic war of Islam with the Christian West, wherein it seeks its historical role. However, it needs to be understood that mainstream Islamic scholarship does not accord a high degree of authenticity to Hadith literature, when it comes to so-called apocalyptic traditions. The standard Islamic position is that only God knows the future and one is not supposed to prejudge it, as that would be claiming knowledge of the hidden, which is the exclusive preserve of the Almisghty. It is for this reason that astrology is considered a grave sin in Islam.

The perversity of ISIS' thinking, makes it more of a doomsday cult than a serious movement championing the cause of Islam. It is clearly far removed from the teachings of a religion it professes to espouse.

This chapter has sought to chart the evolution of extremist narratives by several Sunni transnational terrorist groups (like Al-Qaeda and ISIS) since mid-20th century AD, developed for purposes of propaganda, radicalisation and recruitment. It sought to chronologically sequence the introduction of radical concepts of warfare into the religious discourse (such as terrorism and genocide) by Salafi-jihadist ideologues over the last century, concepts were hitherto prohibited by all classical schools of Islamic jurisprudence.

Every time the votaries of violent jihad suffered a setback in their mission, they did not have the humility to accept the evil deviance of their approach but came up with ever more radical and dangerous forms of warfare, which have been prohibited in Islam in the first place, in order to justify their mad campaign against the contemporary international order. Thus, the ideology of the so-called Salafi-jihadists needs to be discredited by exposing their deviation from the pristine position of Islam, when it comes to the issue of jihad in any public relations campaign based on religious counter-narratives.

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8.   The Counter-Narrative Campaign

> World War III is a guerrilla information war, with no division between military and civilian participation.
>
> —Marshall McLuhan[1]

When Marshall McLuhan introduced the now famous phrase in public relations 'The Medium is the Message',[2] he meant that the meaning of a message transmitted through a medium often gets entangled in the medium chosen for expression. Thus, the signified is often transformed by the signifier and conveys more than the original content itself.

Therefore, it is important to bear in mind the suitability of the medium used for communicating a message (in our case a counter narrative), at the stage of its conceptualisation and construction itself.[3]

According to Sara Zeiger, Programme Manager for the Department of Research and Analysis at Hedayah (Global Counter-Terrorism Center) based in the UAE, any counter-narrative campaign covers the following nine critical steps:[4]

- Understand the push and pull factors
- Identify the target audience
- Identify the explicit or implicit violent extremist narrative
- Set clear goal and objective of the counter-narrative
- Determine an effective messenger
- Identify the mediums where the message will be disseminated
- Develop the logic, content and style of the message
- Develop a strategy for dissemination
- Evaluate and assess the impact of the counter-narrative

For any counter-narrative campaign, a clear and concise understanding of all these variables is essential to make the initiative successful.[5]

Understanding the Push and Pull Factors

Before starting a counter-narrative campaign, it is important to assess the various external factors or what is known as push factors (social, economic, political and security related issues), as well as internal factors that are called pull factors (psychological/emotional, ideological, financial, etc.) that draw people toward radicalisation in the region where a counter-narrative campaign is needed.

A proper evaluation and assessment of these factors could help determine the kind of message to be delivered for greater resonance of the counter-narrative.

Thus the push factors could include issues related to weak governance, poor economy manifesting itself in hyperinflation and unemployment, large presence of security forces in the region that inhibits freedom of movement and enterprise, aggressive action of security forces and profiling of sections of a population, the undermining of ethnic, religious or cultural identities,[6] political or social discrimination among communities by government agencies, forceful evictions or pillage of natural resources by government-backed companies, general breakdown of order and lawlessness, criminal activities and narcotics trade,[7] as well as presence of radical preachers, financiers and/or leaders in the region.

On the other hand, psychological factors or the so-called pull factors would include exacting revenge for real or perceived wrongs, bringing about socio-political change, the lure of guns, drugs and easy money, the feeling to connect with a surrogate family and brotherhood, the assertion of repressed personal or group identity, the prospect of respect and status within a terror group, the belief in reward and bliss in the after-life, the perverse delight in inhuman actions as well as the lure for infamy, as well as the draw of leading an adventurous, exciting, albeit dangerous life.

Identifying the Target Audience

It is very important to define the target audience of a counter-narrative campaign in order to develop and deliver a message to the intended section of the population. A clear description of the specific target audience should include age, gender, education level, localisation, priority interests and online activities.[8]

Manifestations of violent extremism and their narratives incorporate elements of different ethnicities, tribes, religions and social backgrounds. Therefore, narratives should employ the most relevant vernaculars, dialects, even idiomatic expression of the target audience. Thus, a counter-narrative campaign designer should also consider the resonant language of the target audience they are trying to reach. The literary style and diction of the message should also be determined by the kind of culture and level of education of the target audience.

When it comes to radicalisation, the most impressionable and vulnerable sections seem to be the youth. However, even when targeting the youth for a counter-narrative campaign, it becomes important to determine whether the youth are in the formal education system, school dropouts, urban versus rural youth, youth in criminal gangs or those released from prison, youth struggling against poverty and unemployment, etc.

Sometimes the target audience can also be categorised under the following heads: general audience, key influencers and ideologues, supporters/defenders/justifiers of violent extremist groups, or even terrorists themselves.

Identifying the Explicit or Implicit Violent Extremist Narrative

The counter-narrative campaign then needs to identify the kind of extremist narrative being disseminated by radical groups in the region.[9] The radical narrative could be either explicitly or directly disseminated, or implicitly conveyed.

The narratives could also be on a variety of themes: political and military narratives, social and cultural narratives, ethnic and caste-based narratives, religious and ideological narratives, economic narratives or historical narratives.

Thus, a political narrative could try to communicate that a terrorist organisation has better capabilities to administer or govern over a region. It could even send the ironical message that it is better at providing security to the indigenous population than the government. They may even provide healthcare and education at a rudimentary level and position themselves as more sympathetic to the indigenous cause than the government.

If the government has deployed military force or has enforced a security clampdown, the terrorist organisation may stoke up discontent by portraying the government as a repressive force.

Extremist organisations could complain of political as well as social discrimination against the community they represent or speak about the undermining of their social and cultural mores. They could harp upon historical wrongs against their communities, and glorify political and cultural heroes who fought for the community's cause.

Violent extremist groups, particularly the so-called jihadists, rake up fears of threat to religious identity, or speak of insult to and violation of religious sentiment. They aim at turning religion into a political and militant ideology and direct it against the ruling dispensation. Like ISIS, they may even ask locals to migrate to a distant land to live in the idyllic state. The religious narrative could speak of the overthrow of secular rule in favour of a theocratic, fascist or ultra-left communist dispensation.

Therefore, the important thing is to first identity the narrative or set of narratives being disseminated by a group in the given region for the counter-narrative campaign.

Setting Clear Campaign Objectives

After assessing the local context and the nature of the extremist narrative to be countered, the next step is to identify and clearly enunciate the goals and objectives of the counter-narrative campaign. The goals and objectives should be precise about the change in attitude or behaviour that is desired in the target audience, which has already been identified earlier.[10]

- *Disengagement:* The primary aim of most campaigns is disengagement, that is, to reduce or put an end to the involvement

of the target audience in activities of violent extremism and terrorism. *Quantifiable Disengagement* can take place where counter-narratives are delivered face to face, rather than online.

- *Diversion:* The goal of diversion is to stop individuals from being focused on themes and activities of violent extremism. This aim is also to engage them in constructive social and political activities and discourses, and even allow them to express their grievances and view this airing as part of a cathartic release, which reduces the urgency to take desperate or violent action.

- *Raising Awareness:* The goal of such campaigns should be to make vulnerable communities and their leaders aware of the dangers a particular radical organisation or virulent ideology poses to its peace and prosperity. The objective could be to expose the ulterior motives, hidden agenda and insidious intent of these groups to the target audience and how best the latter could protect themselves from such groups.

- *Limiting Impact or Appeal:* Even when a section of the population has started believing in the narrative of extremists and it seems difficult to completely disengage from the radical discourse, counter-narratives should be prepared to create doubts, disagreements and ideological dissensions in the radical ideology to wean away its support from the population.

- *For De-radicalisation Purposes:* Counter-narratives should be made for de-radicalising jailed extremists to reclaim them for the good of society before their release. The government version of religious beliefs and historical events could be developed to counter the extremist version.

- *Broadcast Alternative and National Narrative:* Along with counter-narratives, government could also launch alternative narratives highlighting the government's views, their development efforts and achievements, as well as the broad, humanistic and nationalist narrative to bring back the extremists to the national mainstream.

Without clarity about the specific objective of a counter-narrative campaign, its success cannot be determined or achieved.

Determining the Effective Messenger

Having established the goals and objectives of a counter-narrative, it is important to determine the messenger or messengers that will be most suitable and effective for delivering the message. To address this issue of who is the most suitable messenger, the following questions should be clearly addressed.[11]

- What is the credibility of that messenger with the target audience?
- What is the potential for that messenger to change attitudes?
- What is the potential for that messenger to change behaviours?
- What are the potential negative effects or risks associated with choosing that particular messenger?

In the case of counter-narratives against jihadist ideology, the following most effective messengers and disseminators would be respected:

- Victims and survivors of terrorist attacks,
- Religious scholars and heads of seminaries, mosques, etc.,
- Defectors and reclaimed members of terrorist groups,
- Respected community elders and actors,
- Political leaders,
- Anti-radical propaganda experts at schools, seminaries, jails,
- public institutions, etc., and
- Strategic experts on the subject working in national and international institutions.

The audio medium would be devoid of pictures and would have to focus on the sound and language to make it more resonant, while a public speech would generally have to be more emotive than intellectually profound to be more appealing. The choice of language, colours, lighting, sounds, accent, personality, etc. should be in sync with both the medium and the people who receive the message through it for enhanced acceptability of the message, which should be decided upon at the time of the framing of the message.

Developing Content by using Techniques of Persuasion

The next step in the counter-narrative campaign should be to identify the content of the message that is to be delivered. Chapter IV of the

book, on how to develop counter-narratives details this aspect at great length.

In this regard, it should be added that while developing a message sufficient attention should be given to make it more persuasive and appealing as well as for issuing warnings or creating fear or deterrence.

In this regard, the following methods for being more persuasive could be adopted:

Attention-grabbing Introduction or 'Hook': It is well known that to introduce a persuasive message, it is important to first grab the attention with a novel or an unusual fact, a witty or a surprising statement that is true and delivers the central idea of the message in a very striking, concise and appealing manner. This introduction serves as the 'hook' on which the remainder of the message is delivered. Ideally, the 'hook' in a counter-narrative should directly attack an important contention of the radical discourse and expose its inanity, futility, deviousness or evil, which is to the detriment to the interest of the target audience and opposed to its traditional belief systems and values.[12]

Direct Address to the Concerns of the Target Audience: The message should always speak to the target audience and address their concerns for it to be persuasive, even if it means leaving aside, for a while, concerns of the state or security agencies. In the messaging, priority will have to be given to the community afflicted by the radical message and not the government and security agencies, whose problems can be mentioned later in the message, if at all.

A Clear, Single Message is more Effective: Often, a clear and single message is more effective. A lengthy and complex counter to radical philosophy could confuse the target audience.

Lead with Emotion, Follow with Reason: The importance of emotion should never be lost in any counter-narrative campaign. The attention of the audience should be grabbed with drama, humour, or novelty and followed with specific facts that establish the message's credibility, providing more information leading to the call to action.

Call to Action: Inspiring and Motivating:[13] There has to be a call to action in the counter-narrative, either in terms of an insistence in

revision of views on the part of the target audience when it comes to its sympathies with the radical message or even in terms of more affirmative action against radical thoughts and activities. The call to action should be inspiring and motivating, promising an immediate and better outcome. Sometimes, the suggested step should not be too big, as the smaller the step, the more likely it is for the audience to comply.

Finding Common Ground, and being Responsive to Concerns: A counter-narrative always needs to find a common ground with its target audience, should establish commonality of interest with them, could even mirror the non-objectionable aspects of their ideas and thought processes by speaking their vernacular, idiom and messages, as well as show as much responsiveness to the concerns of the target audience in order to change their perceptions.

The Scarcity Principle: People are often not appreciative or take for granted the painstaking effort government agencies and state administration make in providing any essential services to the citizenry in the most trying circumstances. Radical messaging often belittles and tries to obfuscate the good done to the people by the government. In such times, the counter-narrative campaign could use the scarcity principle used in advertising, by trying to tell people what they might lose in case terrorist forces take charge and deprive the community of the essential amenities of life the people enjoy. This message, however, should be used with great judiciousness and after thorough research.

The Appeal to Authority Principle: In order to be more influential and persuasive, counter-narratives should expose the faulty prescriptions of the radical groups, their lack of expertise in waging a militant campaign, in administering a region and the complete disaster they would bring to a region if given a free rein to govern the life of people they claim to care for.

Similarly, any messages from reputed Islamic scholars, say from reputed Islamic centres like Al Azhar University, Darul Uloom Deoband, etc. gives credence of authority that could easily overrule the claim of self-tutored radical extremists on the matters of radical jihad in the eyes of the public.

These and other persuasive techniques for creating messages that resonate with a target audience, mostly by public relations and advertising companies should be used in developing content for counter-narratives against radicalisation.

Identifying the Mediums for Disseminating Counter-Narratives

A counter-narrative campaign could be made up of one or many forms of counter-narratives suitable to a variety of mediums. It would be important to first identify and explore the range of mediums available for counter-messaging in a region.

Thus, the mediums for delivering counter-narratives could include:
- Videos: short films or animations
- Texts: slogans, hashtags or open letters
- Images: photos or memes
- Online literature
- Pamphlets, graffiti, cartoons, art work or informative posters
- Interactive Social Media messaging
- Speeches in public fora for inter-communal harmony
- Academic curricula promoting harmony
- Audio recordings: podcasts or short audio-clips
- Comics: manga, short panels or graphic novels

When it comes to electronic, telecommunication and digital mediums of communication, the following mediums can be employed
- *Television Channels*: On television channels, counter-narratives could be disseminated by highlighting news as well as entertainment programmes (such as television series) that promote social harmony. Special discussions on social, religious and community welfare that are intelligent and entertaining could be aired. Special discount could be given to advertisements promoting communal harmony, etc.
- *Internet, Social Media Outlets*: At present most internet search engines and social media websites are doing a commendable job in blocking objectionable content and radical literature.

However, there is a lot of radical content available on the Dark Web, which serves as an echo chamber for extremists. *Counternarrative content needs to be developed and uploaded both on search engines and even on the Dark Web* if possible, so that any confused prospective recruit for a terrorist group could access counter-narratives to extremist literature in the very place it finds the radical content. Thus, both microblogs and vlogs (video logs) should be developed for such messaging.

- *Online and Offline Newspapers and e-Magazines*: Newspapers, news portals and magazines both in print and on the Internet should carry articles that send out positive or alternate counter-narratives that directly or indirectly dissuade youngsters from choosing the path of extremism and violence. Articles, opinion edits, surveys and research studies promoting counter-narrative literature could be promoted through these publications.

- *Movies and short films*: From mainstream commercial movies (partially funded or promoted by the government), animation movies with social messages as well as short films and documentaries with strong alternative and counter-narrative content could be developed. Films illustrating lives of reclaimed radicals and terrorism victims both for warning and inspiration could be made.

- *Academic Curricula*: Strong historical, social, religious and political counter-narratives could be imbedded in the syllabi of various educational curricula (both mainstream and religious) so that a whole new generation could be raised, which is immune to the message of radicalisation.

- *Public Forums, Speeches*: Religious seminars, inter-faith and inter- community dialogue fora and literature on their joint resolutions, speeches and collaborative effort should be published to foster the ongoing narrative.

- *Vernacular Publications, Youth Magazines*: Counter-narratives in vernacular press and literature of communities vulnerable to radicalisation should be generated. Their presence even in literature for the young such as comic books and graphic novels could help in immunising young population from radical messages.

- *Radio, Podcasts and Audio Clips*: Songs, celebrity messages, audio clips of reclaimed radicals or terrorism victims could prove effective counter-radicalisation tools in the audio form. Radio programmes are quite useful while driving or commuting and makes people listen more patiently than in other situations.
- *Mobile Theatre Troupes and Street Plays*: To generate greater awareness against radicalisation, street dramas, and mobile threatre performances could be encouraged.
- *Advertising and PR Agencies developing Catchphrases and Slogans*: Messages against extremism and in support of tolerance could be propagated through various mediums by using catchy slogans, poetic couplets and slogans that remain in collective memory and serve as a deterrent against extremist indoctrination.

Having explored all these mediums for disseminating counter-narratives, it would be important to determine what combination of mediums would be most suitable given the objectives, the target audience, the available channels and messaging agencies, etc. for the campaign.

Strategy for Dissemination of Messages

As stated in the beginning of the chapter, the medium is very critical to both the development and the success of a message. For example, it is said if a message is simple make a video of it, if it is complex write a book.

Any counter-narratives disseminating strategy should employ the right mix of messages and their most suitable mediums to be effective. Some of the recommendations for strategic dissemination of messages are given below:

- Choice of appropriate language(s) for the campaign to ensure the message resonates with the target audience.
- Preference to two-way communication between the messenger and the recipient.
- Linking the timing of the campaign to existing events already occurring in the community.

- Supplementing offline campaigns with an online presence to provide additional information.

Evaluating the Impact of a Counter-Narrative Campaign

The most critical and difficult to determine aspect of a counter-narrative campaign is to gauge its effectiveness. In fact, evaluating the impact of counter-narrative campaigns starts with linking it back to the goals and objectives that were established earlier, and in the articulation of the desired change of the campaign. A proper evaluation of the outcome necessitates ongoing monitoring and assessment of the campaign throughout pre-designated points on the campaign timeline.

The need of a Central Institution for Developing Counter-narrative Campaigns

As stated earlier, counter-narratives should not be framed outside the framework of a coherent and comprehensive strategic communications programme, which should be in sync with the national policy and strategy in the campaign against terrorism, with clearly defined aims and objectives.

There should be clearly detailed timelines as well as metrics for assessment of the counter-narratives, which should ideally employ a variety of mediums, agents and approaches as part of a coordinated and continuous operation from a central hub for information production and dissemination. Thus, a central locus with organisational and financial authority to bring consistency and control over the counter-radicalisation messaging is essential for providing desired results.

The central hub should have a corpus that is flexible and quick in changing tactics, able to receive inputs from the ground and for repackaging the messages without any semblance of inconsistency. Institutional affiliation may or may not be revealed by the messages, and it is not inappropriate to put up 'fronts', or agents communicating the message, particularly when the receiver is not willing to accept a message from the source.

There could be various counter-narratives for immediate (to bring down public anger and hostility in wake of sudden flare-ups), short term (addressing a major contemporary divisive social or political issue), medium term counter-narratives (announcing plans and incentives to bring communities closer over months and years), long-term counter-narratives (messages that are fundamental to national harmony and should be repeated over the years greater social and national cohesion.

Need for Greater Coordination with Major Counter-narrative Initiatives and Agencies around the World

Several international organisations have been issuing guidelines, setting up institutions for developing counter-narrative content and their dissemination around the world. It is important to review and capitalise on their work and experience, while developing expertise in the development of counter-narratives. Some of them are mentioned hereunder:

- **UN Counterterrorism Executive Directorate (CTED):** In April 2017, the Security Council published a comprehensive international framework to counter terrorist narratives. It focuses on the development of counter-narratives, highlighting the importance of public-private partnerships and governments acting as 'facilitators' rather than direct messengers of counter-narratives.[14]

- **Global Counter-terrorism Forum (GCTF)/Hedayah Center:** The GCTF was created in 2011 by 29 founding Member States, including the US, the UK, the UAE, the Netherlands, and China, as well as the EU in an informal environment to act on counter-terrorism efforts. The forum 'serves as a mechanism for furthering the implementation of the universally-agreed UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.'[15]

  The UAE offered to host what became known as the Hedayah Center, which was created formally in December 2012 with a focus on 'capacity building programs, dialogue and communications, in addition to research and analysis to counter violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations'.[16]

Hedayah's focus on dialogue and communications is aimed at closely engaging 'with communities and stakeholders that have only been peripherally involved in CVE in the past … [including] previously under-represented groups (e.g. youth, women, educators and community leaders).'[17]

Furthermore, it encourages the designing of counter-narrative messages through their 'Counter-Narrative Library', 'a comprehensive portal where governments, front-line workers and civil society can access content, toolkits and good practices to counter the narratives of all forms of violent extremism.'[18]

- **Centre for Strategic Counter-terrorism Communications (CSCC)/Global Engagement Centre (GEC):** Established in 2010, the Centre for Strategic Counter-terrorism Communications (CSCC) was a US interagency-based unit housed in the State Department.

  The CSCC had a number of core priorities, including: monitoring and evaluating extremist narratives online, developing and disseminating US strategic communications, identifying trends in extremist narratives, and collecting relevant data from other US agencies.[19]

  The CSCC was replaced by the GEC in March 2016 by Executive Order 13721 of President Obama. Rather than the direct strategy of the CSCC, the GEC takes a more indirect and partnership-oriented approach, attempting to work with local actors, who can provide a more credible voice.[20]

- **Sawab Centre/Malaysian Regional Digital Counter-Messaging Center (RDC3):** The Sawab Centre of Malaysia is in partnership with the UAE and focusses on exposing IS's incompetence rather than portraying the group's brutality, while the latter with the Royal Malaysian Police is aimed at curbing ISIS ideology online.

- **NATO Centres of Excellence:** NATO hosts a number of 'Centres of Excellence' in different member states, including two that relate specifically to countering terrorist narratives. First, the 'Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga, Latvia', which was established in 2014, is a dedicated operation that focuses on the dissemination of content via a number of

channels, including 'traditional media, internet-based media and public engagement, to build awareness, understanding, and support for its decisions and operations.'[21]

- **The Centre for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE):** Ably led by Dr Anne Speckhard, this Washing-based centre not only does groundbreaking research on counter-terrorism but is actively engaged in fighting radicalisation and reclaiming radicalised individuals. The center has done a lot of work in countering online radicalisation and recruitment by terrorists and has generated a lot of effective print and video content on the Internet to fight radicalisation.

- **OSCE/OSCE United:** The world's largest regional security association, the OSCE, consists of 57 different states across Europe, Asia, and North America and EU Internet Forum. It has launched many counter-terrorism public relation campaigns. In its first 18 month campaign, #UnitedCVE it reached more than 16 million people online, engaging both those in OSCE-participating states and beyond. An example of this was the hosting of the final of the Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Challenging Extremism competition, sponsored by the US State Department and Facebook, in which university students from around the world 'identify, develop and pitch a digital or social initiate product or tool to educate and empower their peers to challenge violent extremism.'[22]

- **The Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP):** This is an initiative launched under the umbrella of the EU Internet Forum, launched in 2015. The CSEP works through partnering civil society organisations with social media companies, providing training and building capacity as well as 'supporting campaigns designed to reach vulnerable individuals and those at risk of radicalisation and recruitment by extremists.' There have been 28 workshops in 2017 as part of this initiative in different member states, covering topics such as creating online counter-narratives, campaigns, lessons learned, and target audiences.

- **Syria Strategic Communication Advisory Team and European Strategic Communication Network (ESCN):** The Syria Strategic

Communications Advisory Team (SSCAT) was established in January 2015 as an eighteen month-project to tackle the 'national and local communications challenges in discouraging their citizens from travelling to Syria or other conflict zones … [to] participate in terrorist activities.'[23]

The SSCAT's tasks include the sharing of information and best practice of 25 EU Member States on topics such as research, social media training, and communications strategies to support counter-narratives. As the SSCAT's remit of 18 months came to an end, the project was transitioned into the European Strategic Communication Network (ESCN) to continue to make use of the information-sharing services to better understand radicalisation and polarisation around Europe.[24]

- **Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN):** This European network gathers and disseminates insights on four different parts of counter-narratives: the content of such narratives, the target audiences, the credibility of messengers, and the different methods of dissemination. The working group hosts a number of 'Ex-post' papers, which highlight lessons learned after different RAN activities and working group meetings. One of the most important roles of the network is the 'RAN Collection' (discussed in Section 3), which hosts an in-depth study of different approaches to the prevention of violent extremism, having reviewed over 138 practices in a regularly updated document for readers to draw inspiration from.

- **Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD)/Quilliam Foundation/ Moonshot CVE:** Central to the Quilliam Foundation or ISD's mission is the notion that credible and independent community groups are the most effective messengers in delivering counter-narratives, but that they can be aided by organisations such as the ISD, who can build capacity and offer resources to facilitate their work. They also operate with a number of communication and technology companies, including Facebook, Google, Twitter, Jigsaw, M&C Saatchi and Microsoft.

  One example of the ISD's work is the Counter-Narrative Toolkit,[25] an online resource aimed to inspire would-be local

campaigns by offering advice on how to plan, create content, and promote counter-narratives. Another example is the Extreme Dialogue programme, which 'uses the stories of real people, told in their own words, raw and unscripted, so that young people can learn from those whose lives have been profoundly impacted by extremism.'[26]

- **Private tech companies/Silicon Valley:** The Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFTC) and Tech Against Terrorism are two major counter-terrorism initiatives launched by private tech companies based in the Silicon Valley.
  One example is the GIFTC, launched in July 2017 by Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube, in an attempt to make their services hostile to terrorists and violent extremists. Each of the companies have their own individual counterspeech initiatives, such as YouTube's Creators for Change, Jigsaw's Redirect Method,[27] Facebook's P2P Challenging Extremism,[28] and Microsoft's partnership with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue.[29]

Anothernotablecounter-narrativeinitiativeis#stopviolentjihadisme social media campaign that aims to discourage French youth from travelling to conflict zones in Syria and Iraq.

Islamic Scholars in the Field of Religious Counter-narratives

Several Muslim scholars who have written and spoken against the ideology of so-called jihadi and Pak-based terrorism and have presented the authentic and peaceful message of Islam, which preaches living in harmony with other communities and calls for embracing modern secular and democratic polity. The names of a few are as following:

- Abdallah bin Mahfudh ibn Bayyah, Mauritanian professor of Islamic studies at the King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. His efforts in building counter-narratives against jihadism have been officially commended and endorsed by former US President Barack Obama.

- Hamza Yusuf aka Mark Hanson, American Islamic scholar, advisor to the Centre for Islamic Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley.
- Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, Pakistani politician and Sunni Islamic scholar, Professor of international constitutional law at the University of the Punjab.
- Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, Pakistani Islamic modernist theologist, founder of Al-Mawrid Institute of Islamic Sciences.
- Ali Gomah, The former Grand Mufti of Egypt, Shaykh Ali Gomaa, has a number of research articles and fatwas on his website discussing the concept of jihad in Islam. His books and articles against extremist interpretation of Jihad include *Jihad: Concept, History and Contemporary Approaches*, *The Rules and Ethics of War in Islam*, *Fatwa on Jihad*.
- Moulana Mehmood Madani, former Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha (2006 to 2012), General Secretary of the Muslim organisation Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind.
- Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Islamic scholar and peace activist, Padma Bhushan awardee.
- Yvonne Ridley was captured by the Taliban in 2001, and after 11 days in captivity in Afghanistan she converted to Islam. Since then she has been preaching the moderate version of the religion.
- Sayyed Imam Al-Sharif,aka "Dr. Fadl" and Abd Al-Qader Bin 'Abd Al-'Aziz, earlier Ayman Al-Zawahiri's oldest associate, authored *al-'Umda fi I'dad al-'Udda* ("The Essentials of Making Ready [for Jihad]"). His latest book, *Reclaiming Jihad* is a severe critique of the violence perpetrated in the name of jihad by Al-Qaeda and ISIS.
- Wael B. Hallaq is a world renowned scholar of Islamic law and Islamic intellectual history. A Syrian Christian, he is an Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University at the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies. His recent work, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (Columbia University Press, 2013), has won Columbia University Press's Distinguished Book Award for 2013-2015. He is highly respected in the Muslim world.

- Natana J. DeLong-Bas, American scholar and the author of a number of books on Islam, Assistant professor at the Boston College theology department. Author of *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*.[30]
- Sherman A. Jackson aka Abdul Hakim Jackson, American Muslim scholar of Islam, King Faisal Chair of Islamic Thought and Culture and Professor of Religion and American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California.
- Myriam Francois-Cerrah, a Franco-British writer, broadcaster and academic on issues related to Islam, France and the Middle East.
- Maajid Usman Nawaz, the founding chairman of Quilliam, a counter-extremism think tank that seeks to challenge the narratives of Islamist extremists.
- Imran NazarHosein, Islamic scholar, author of *Jerusalem in the Qur'an* and other books.
- Nouman Ali Khan, American Muslim speaker and Arabic instructor who founded The Bayyinah Institute for Arabic and Qur'anic Studies, after serving as a professor of Arabic at Nassau Community College.
- Ismail ibn Musa Menk, a Muslim cleric and Grand Mufti of Zimbabwe.
- Yusuf Estes, American preacher from Texas, a delegate to the United Nations World Peace Conference for Religious Leaders held at the UN in September 2000.
- Shabir Ally, President of the Islamic Information and Dawah Centre International in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- Muhammed Fethullah Gülen Hocaefend, a Turkish preacher, founder of the Gülen movement.
- Timothy John Winter (ShaykhAbdal Hakim Murad), a British Sunni Muslim scholar, researcher, writer and academic. He is the Dean of the Cambridge Muslim College, Director of Studies (Theology and Religious Studies) at Wolfson College and the Shaykh Zayed Lecturer in Islamic Studies at Cambridge University.
- Yahyah Michot, Professor of Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations, Hartford Seminary, Connecticut.

- Nuh Ha Mim Keller, a specialist in Islamic law in Amman.
- Asma Afsaruddin, Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at Indiana University in Bloomington. Author of *Striving in the Path of God: Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought*.[31]
- Suhaib Webb, former imam of the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center (ISBCC).
- Reza Aslan, Iranian-American author, public intellectual, religious studies scholar. He has written several books on religion, notably 'Beyond Fundamentalism: Confronting Religious Extremism in the Age of Globalisation'[32] Aslan is a member of the American Academy of Religion, the Society of Biblical Literature, and the International Qur'anic Studies Association. He is also a professor of creative writing at University of California, Riverside.

Although these names are well respected and known for providing religion-based counter-narratives and arguments against jihadism, this study does not fully endorse or subscribe to any of the views and statements these scholars might espouse or advocate.

Their statements, coming from their reading of religious scripture and exegeses, may prove useful but have to be studied and applied in accordance with the needs of any specific strategic communications campaign.

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9.   Afterword: Confronting Winds of Radical Change

> The tyrannical man is the son of the democratic man.
>
> —Plato[1]

Following the defeat of totalitarian and collectivist political movements—first fascism and then communism in the last century—liberal democracy and free market capitalism were extolled as the core ideals of a new, globalised order. To political philosophers like Francis Fukuyama, neo-liberalism of the early 1990s marked the end-point of mankind's ideological evolution and a period that saw the final form of human government.[2]

Three decades later, an older and much wizened Fukuyama has become critical of his own earlier assertions and warns about the crisis of democracy in the wake of identity politics and new tribalism.[3]

The generally accepted view among political commentators, economists and psephologists of our times is that liberal institutions of democracy and capitalism are becoming increasingly unpopular, if not dysfunctional, which makes the task of strategic and security experts fighting the winds of radicalism extremely daunting to say the least.

Far from being the liberating, egalitarian and empowering ideology that emancipated much of the 20th century world from the throes of totalitarian oppression, the neo-liberal global order of the day is being increasingly perceived as an exploitative, hegemonic order that should either reform or give way to old, atavistic forms

of governance. Thus, most radical narratives of our times—ranging from that of Islamists, leftwing extremists or White supremacists—brand liberalism as the ideological bogey used by the less than one percent of human population (the super-rich capitalist elite) to justify their amassing of untold wealth and influence, which they then employ to dominate large section of mankind by subverting democracies through unaccounted for campaign funding and the control of corporate media.

It is this resonant narrative of radical ideologies which has made liberalism the target of popular resentment and the principal cause for the many geopolitical, economic and environmental ills faced by the world today. Moreover, radical religious and nationalist movements, on the excuse of restoring the primacy of meaning and identity from the ideological muddle of post-modern indeterminacy, have managed to disseminate messages of exclusivity and hate around the world.

As democracies become more contentious and mired in electoral partisanship, a wave of populist nationalism is sweeping across the global political landscape that celebrates decisive strongmen in top leadership positions, as is manifest in the rise of Vladimir Putin, Recep Erdogan, Xi Jinping, Donald Trump and even in rise of radical non-state head honchos like Hassan Nasrallah and Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. In such a climate, the big question is whether there is a clear shift in the Hegelian zeitgeist against the values of liberalism, whose core values of secularism, human rights and democracy formed the basis of the modern nation state and a liberal international order? Will the pluralistic and multi-cultural liberalism of the 21st century withstand its gravest existential challenge and deliver a prosperous and just globalised order or will divisive forces of religious fundamentalism and nationalist exceptionalism drag the world down into interminable wars of annihilation?

These are huge questions related to forces determining the course of human history and civilisation, which transcend the paradigms of conventional military and security studies. It would be unfair to ask security experts or counter-radicalisation researchers to build dykes against this rising tide of resentment and radicalism in our societies

and politics. The work of reviving and re-invigorating the principles of liberalism to meet the aspirations of 21st century mankind is cut out for contemporary political philosophers, social activists and economic theorists, who for now seem to be losing the plot against votaries of identity politics and violent extremism.

One of the ways forward for liberalism would be to adapt itself to the changing mood of the times. The time may have come to acknowledge, even recognise the wealth of knowledge and wisdom inherent in traditional cultures and religions, which liberalism is often accused of overlooking on account of its fondness for the scientific temper and a futuristic mindset. Perhaps, liberalism could find parallels for its values of universalism, liberty and egalitarianism in pre-modern cultures to make its ideology more resonant and acceptable, just as this book has attempted with its study of Islam. There is also a need to redesign neo-liberalism by freeing it from the trappings of unbridled capitalism so that it recaptures the imagination of the masses. It will also have to redefine human progress beyond economic and technological parameters and embrace values and norms closer to human nature and beyond the dour certitude of empirical facts.

Thankfully for India, the values of a multicultural and multi-religious pluralism as enshrined in our secular and democratic constitution remains the cherished ideal of our society. It is from this brilliantly drafted document that we need to derive messages for a grand narrative to counter all radical propaganda.

Notes

1. Plato, *The Republic*, Book IX, 571a-580a.
2. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Penguin Books, 1992.
3. Francis Fukuyama, 'Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment', Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 1st Edition, 2018.

Index

To counter the rising threat of the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda and their affiliates, every counter-terrorism practitioner should read 'Countering the Radical Narrative'. With his mastery of extremist ideologies and terrorist narratives, Dr Adil Rasheed has produced an invaluable and a timely work.

— Professor **Rohan Gunaratna**
Founder International Centre for Political Violence
and Terrorism Research, Singapore

Countering the Radical Narrative

Terrorist groups are driven by extremist political ideologies or distorted religious discourses, which they then propagate through traditional and modern means of communication to wean more recruits to their diabolic designs.

The indoctrination of these extremist ideologies lead to transformation of law-abiding citizens into violent extremists, a process known as radicalisation. This book proposes ways and techniques for reversing this process of radicalisation by taking the fight to the terrorists in the ideological domain. It proposes ways for developing and launching counter-narrative campaigns against radicalisation in order to drain the ideological swamp from which terrorist organisations continue to rear their ugly heads. This book specifically provides conceptual insights into developing counter-narratives against jihadist organisations, like Al Qaeda, ISIS and Pakistan-based terror groups.

Countering the Radical Narrative is meant for readers interested in understanding techniques of radical indoctrination, specifically those of contemporary jihadist groups. It could be particularly useful for counter-terrorism experts, military and security agencies operating in terrorism-infested regions and media organisations covering news about radical groups and their ideologies.

Dr Adil Rasheed is Research Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA) and is Coordinator of the Centre for Counter-Terrorism at the Institute. Author of the book *ISIS: Race to Armageddon* (2015), he is one of India's noted scholars in the field of counter-radicalisation. His research papers, namely 'Jihadist Radicalisation in India: Internal Challenges, External Threats' and 'Countering the Threat of Radicalisation: Theories, Programmes and Challenges' are being widely read and referred to in the Indian strategic community. A student of Islamic theology and history, Dr Rasheed writes extensively for Indian and international media organisations.