

Islamic radicalism, its roots and causes

Islamic radicalism is a political reaction, by Muslims, to the current state of the Muslim world, and the oppressive policies of foreign powers (in particular US and Israel). Many Islamic radicals favour a revolutionary change in the governments and societies in the Muslim world. This, they believe will lead to a just new order, and a long overdue challenge to imperialism and Zionism. A small minority of radicals resort to violence to achieve their aims. It is this group who are the subject of this leaflet.

In some extreme cases it leads to the use of violence to resolve perceived grievances. This latter extreme case of radicalism is found in a tiny minority from within the Muslims and is the subject of this leaflet.

Its roots and causes

We will discuss a number of different factors that cause violent radicalization within the Muslims. At the head of all these factors is the use of a number of distorted and unrepresentative interpretations of the Islamic faith to justify violence by hate preachers. We will discuss this point in some detail then move on to other causes. All advocates to Islamic extremism preach a common set of beliefs, though they vary in methodology and extent of implementation. They justify their extreme violence by the following claims:

Firstly, their claim that Islam places an **obligation upon** believers to physically fight and explicitly kill non-Muslims in the UK. This is because they are forcing democracy and Western values in Muslim lands, often through economic and military warfare, leading to the deaths of countless civilians. This interpretation, they believe, legitimizes their violent acts.

This can be refuted in a number of different ways. However two examples should suffice the intelligent reader. Allah said in the Quran: **and fight those who fight you, and do not transgress for verily Allah does not love the transgressors.**

Not all advocates of Western values are physically fighting the Muslims such that we must fight all citizens of that oppressing country, not discriminating between soldiers, women, children, monks and rabbis. Also Allah said :

“and let their be from amongst those who go out to fight, those who remain behind to learn their religion so when they come back they can teach them what they know not”.

In many campaigns the Prophet (s) sent back men able to fight. An example of this is the man who came to the Prophet saying “I want to fight Jihad with you”. The Prophet asked him do you have a mother. He replied “yes”. So the Prophet (s) said to him: “go and be dutiful to her” This proves that fighting is not always an obligation upon all Muslims. There are countless other examples of such incidents which prove this violent radical view to be incorrect.

Their second justification is that they brand the current governments of many Muslim states as ‘apostate’ - that is as having turned away from Islam - on the basis that those states do not conform to how a Muslim state should be run by making the shariah (Islamic law) the law of that land. By labeling existing Muslim states in this way, the extremists believe they can justify taking violent action against those governments and citizens (who support them), even though they are coreligionists. So even the Muslims are not safe from their violence.

In reply to this claim there is an in-depth refutation to show its falsehood, but in brief explanation. Any Muslim, be he a leader of a state or a citizen of the state, cannot be removed from the religion of Islam without first fulfilling those conditions which remove them, and those which hold them within the folds of Islam are negated. Not judging by the Shariah (Islamic law) does not in all cases remove one from within the fold of Islam. Also, if for arguments sake we agree that this particular government has apostated, this does not legitimize violence and rebellion in all cases. There are Islamic laws consisting of conditions and regulations which govern revolt and violence. For example, the regulation of the weighing up of the ‘harms and ‘benefits’ under the rules of political shariah. Violent rebellion could lead to a greater harm than the mere fact a leader has apostated. In such cases Islam prohibits violence and rebellion. Please see the pamphlet entitled “Refuting Extremism Part 2” for a further in-depth clarification with evidences.

Their third justification, is that Islam itself is facing an active, sustained, short and long-term attack from what they describe as Christian and Jewish inspired, but secular West. This is done by characterizing relations between Muslims and Westerners as a long history of injustices and grievances some violent, others non violent. So they claim to be acting in defense of Islam and the Muslims, and they prey on the average non radicalized Muslim’s emotion and lack of Islamic knowledge.

In reply to this argument it is agreed that there was and still is a long term attack against the Muslims from its enemies. But a distinction between violent and non violent attacks must be made clear. Each one has a specific response in accordance to true justice in the law of Islam. However, what is (incorrect) is their extremism and use of indiscriminate in their claim of defending Islam against this long term attack. We have not been ordered to defend ourselves from an ideological attack with violence. And we have not been ordered to defend ourselves from violence with transgression like that of killing innocent people indiscriminately through suicide bombs. Furthermore Muslims have not been ordered to segregate, hate, and be harsh with non Muslims when they live as a Muslim minority under a contractual oath with the non Muslim host country. Not all westerners attack, kill or are unjust to the Muslims, not all of them are involved in an ideological attack against us. Allah says: **and fight in the way of Allah those who fight you and do not transgress for verily Allah does not love the transgressor.** (Al Baqarah: 190).

Justice is the basis of Islam, we must be just to all Muslims and non Muslims. Our emotional state should not determine our beliefs and actions rather the Quran and the Sunnah are our foundations. Our emotions are determined by them. If we do the opposite then we are following our desires as ‘emotions’ are the very essence of desires. Allah said: **and do not follow your desires lest you astray from the right path.** [An-Nisaa’ (4):135].

He also said: **if this religion Islam was based upon desires then indeed the skies and the earth would cleft asunder.**

It is important to understand that an alienated Muslim who has become highly radicalized is not necessarily a terrorist or extremist or even violent. Only a tiny minority

of radicalized Muslims actually cross over to become violent extremists.

As mentioned earlier, there are a range of potential factors in Islamic radicalization. No one factor predominates. It is likely that the catalyst for any given Muslim becoming violently radical will be a combination of different factors particular to that person.

Other potentially radicalizing factors include the development of a sense of grievance against the West and experienced injustice. Some argue that the West does not apply consistent standards in its foreign policy. Conflicts such as Bosnia, Chechnya and Gaza where Muslims have been the victims of violence, are given as examples where Western nations have failed to act quickly or effectively enough to protect Muslim civilians. The reason being they had no interest to gain in this intervention. Also by refusing to condemn Israel for building illegal settlements in the West Bank, its collective punishment against civilian populations and its persistent violation of UN resolutions, the West is seen to be rewarding Zionist terrorism. They also perceive the approach to the Middle-East Peace Process, where the UK is actively committed to a two-state solution, as political double standards. Backing the right for Israel to 'defend' itself yet, Muslims are labeled terrorists and placed in Guantanamo Bay prison for defending their lands.

The process of globalization, in particular over the past two decades, has had ramifications right across the world and in many countries the effect has been not just economic, but also political, social and cultural change on a significant scale. The impact of globalization on local ways of life, especially on those already predisposed to be suspicious of the West leads many to believe that these changes as a deliberate attempt to replace Islamic structures and values. For example, Muslim governments are investing huge amounts of wealth in promoting western values at the expense of Islamic and moral education of their citizens. Closing down Islamic schools and building secular schools which promote western values and ideology are cited as examples of this. Also the introduction of Blue chip companies and retail outlets in Muslim countries, bring with it a culture of music, western fashion, and promiscuity, are considered vices and prohibited in Islam.

The presence of Western interests, especially military forces, in Muslim countries. like that of the presence of the USA in the holy land of Saudi Arabia is seen by Muslims

as a source of shame. It is also seen as a front for harming and humiliating the Muslims, as well as the beginning of an occupation.

Specific events - for example, the war in Kuwait, the attack on Afghanistan, the US and UK invasion of Iraq, the West's support of Ethiopia against Somali are portrayed as attacks on Islam itself. Muslims perceive the West as fearing any land that implements the Islamic Shariah, as well as an obstacle to any possible country which is on the road to implementing Shariah.

Media coverage of incidents involving Western forces in Muslim countries, abuse of prisoners and civilians in Abu Ghuraib and Guantanamo also lead many Muslims to consider the West as hostile to Islam.

The anti terror laws in the UK have led to many Muslims feeling under siege and hence feeling alienated from society. Factors such as racism, social exclusion, and lack of opportunity contribute to this feeling of alienation. This has resulted in many Muslims searching and "rediscovering" their identity. Some, in the process of searching for their identity may become radicalized and a very small minority may embrace the ideology of violent radicalisation.

Another very important factor is exposure to violent radical ideas. This may come from reading radical literature on Islamic and other subjects or surfing the Internet but more often extreme radicalization seems to arise from local contacts and from peers.

Exposure to a forceful and inspiring figure, already committed to violent extremism, can also be a cause. This person may be associated with a particular place (e.g. a prison, house or mosque) or can be a national or international figure, seen on dvd's or heard on tapes.

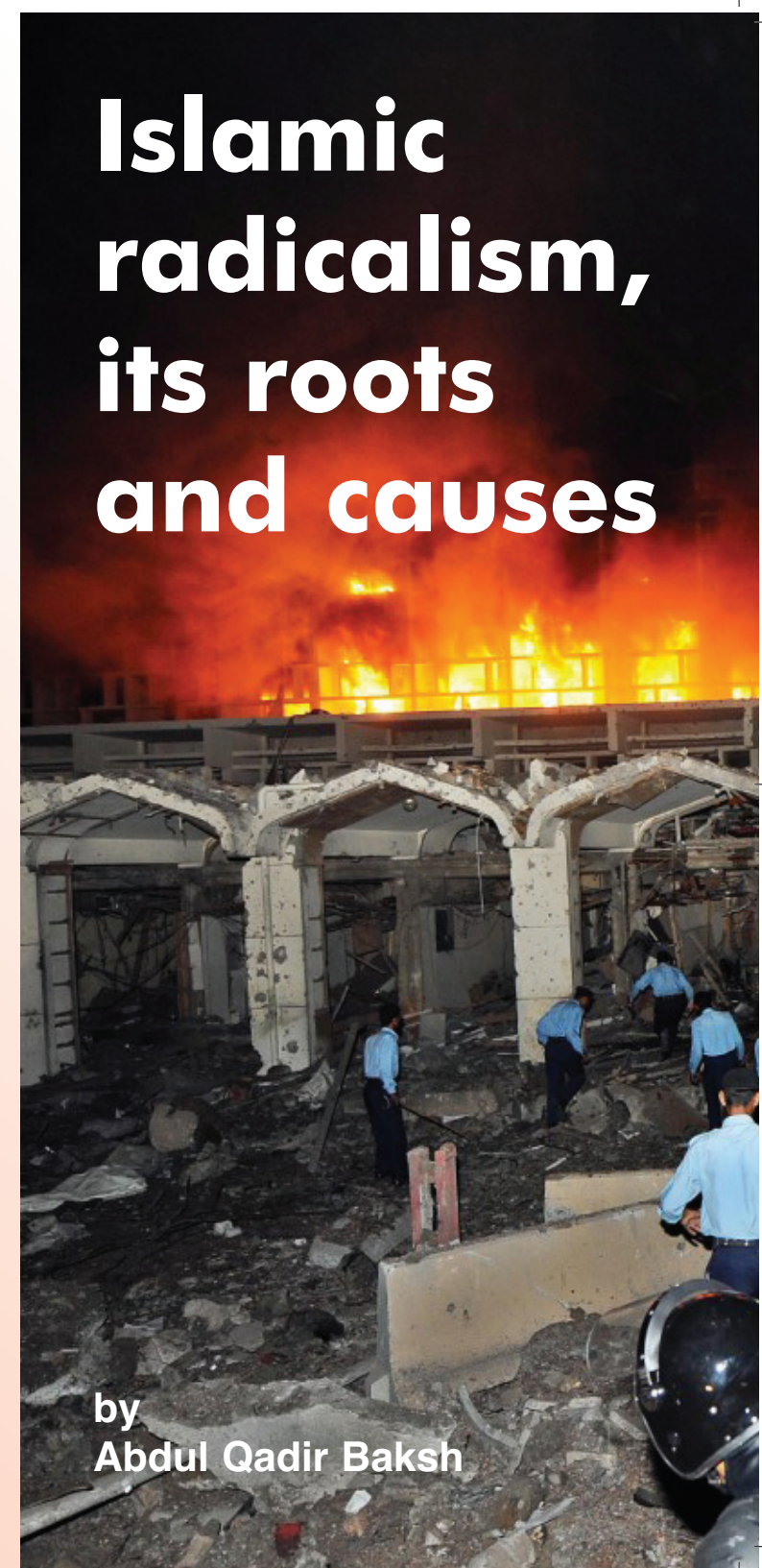
None of these causes are conclusive and they are probably best viewed as considerations which may influence violent radicalization. As mentioned before, in all the causes above. only a tiny minority of radicalized Muslims become over emotional and cross over into violent extremism.

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