



**Original Article**

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## The Concept of Jihad in the Neo-Salafist Doctrine with an Emphasis on Economic Jihad: A Review

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**ABSTRACT:** This study provides a review on the notion of Jihad in Neo-Salafist philosophy with an emphasis on economic Jihad. In specific, this research seeks to answer the question as to how the economic structure of the institutions derived from the Neo-Salafist doctrine has been shaped. This is an applied research conducted following a descriptive, analytical design and with a qualitative content. The findings suggest that the role of the component Jihad as the most important practical principle was very prominent in the appearance of the Neo-Salafist movement, giving rise to a different kind of economic Jihad. In sum, the involvement in the notion of Jihad has provided the ground for increasing violence both in Muslim and non-Muslim communities and has led to outbreak of major crises such as increased regional conflicts and probability of a war on International scale, political instability, growing power of the Takfiri terrorist groups, and secessionism in the region. Indeed, the Takfiri groups, as a product of the Neo-Salafist current, by developing the concept of Jihad, have derived a kind of economic Jihad based on which their economic structure is defined by exploiting such resources as oil export, issue of banknotes and passport, and extortion from European companies. This study gives important insight into the economic structure of ISIS both as a crucial factor for its survival and its weak point.

**KEYWORDS:** Neo-Salafist, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Takfir, Jihad, economic Jihad, development of Jihad concept

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Before discussing the Neo-Salafi views, we need to give an account of the Salafi current course of development. The Salafi current, from its beginning to this time, has gone through four distinct historical periods, extending from the 7th century AH when its foundation was laid until the 15th century when it was ideologized by Seyed Ghotb (Widhyoga, 2017: 55).

The first phase is known as the "theoretical formation," As was noted by Ibn Taymiyyah Harrani, it was founded under the influence of Ahmad ibn Hanbal in the 7th and 8th centuries AH. It was at this time that the theoretical and ideological bases of the Salafi current were laid down by Ibn Taymiyyah as its main theoretician and founder. He believed that Muslims cannot interpret the Quran according to their own logical reasoning. He believed that one should suffice with what is literally understood from it, while one should stand silent about Quran's *mutashabihat* (verses with seemingly vague and no clear meaning). Ibn Taymiyyah Harrani stands as the ideological, spiritual, intellectual and scientific model for all Salafists who call him Shaykh al-Islām.

The second phase is identified as the "adoption and execution" phase which was implemented by Mohammad Abdolvahab and his successors in the mid-12th century AH and the early 13th century AH in the restricted environment of Hijaz. Mohammad Abdolvahab was the first one who after becoming familiar with Ibn Taymiyyah's ideas accompanied the Saud's son and institutionalized the heretic sect of Wahhabism (Al-Wahhabiyyah) in the Arabian peninsula, so as even today it is the dominant discourse in Saudi-ruled Arabia.

The third stage is the Salafist "formation and propagation" stage and its transformation into a powerful and influential movement in the Muslim world from India and Pakistan in Asia to Egypt and Algeria in North Africa, which has been mainly sponsored by Saudi's oil dollars and executed by the grandsons of the Saudi's aristocracy and clerics since World War I. This stage especially covers the periods 1970s and 1980s AD when Salafism was expanding at full pace. It was at this time that universities based on Salafi doctrines were founded, under the auspices of the Saudi monarchy.

The fourth stage of the Salafist current is known as the "ideologization" or "ideology building" phase. This stage is mostly characterized by transformation of the Salafi ideas into a revolutionary ideology in early 15th century and the birth of the phenomenon Salafist political-combative groups in Egypt, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Philippines, the post-soviet muslim countries in Central Asia, and Yemen. This stage was most influenced by the theories and teachings of Seyed Ghotb (1906-1966) the Egyptian author and theorist. Seyed Ghotb is often known as the most important theoretical advocate of extremist Islamism in the 20th century. This is, to a large extent, for the books he wrote hereon, and also for his last book in which he tries to draw a strong link between religion and politics (or between mosque and state). He is especially notorious for the complex and controversial views he developed round certain topics within the traditional Islam framework.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### **Takfir (Anathema) As the Outcome of the Neo-Salafist Current**

Some of the genealogists of the Takfiri (or self-differentiation) current maintain that what as Takfir is going on today at an ever increasing rate, in terms of genealogy, has its origin in the pre-Islamic era, in the Age of Ignorance. Because there is no single evidence, neither in Quran nor in the prophet's Medina years, to be found that supports this attitude. Therefore, it is argued that the idea of Takfir is not a return to the early Islamic tradition but a recourse to the customs of the pre-prophet era of Ignorance which is distinguished



in the tribal logic by fighting the 'others'. This differentiating attitude was conspicuous in their dealings in war, murder, plunder, etc.

From a genealogical point of view, with introduction of Islam, a period followed which was characterized by a power logic and cognitive structure quite different from the earlier periods. Prophet Muhammad with his divine guidance decided to build a new construct by molding a power and knowledge structure which was distinct from that of the pre-Islamic era. In doing so, he redefined many of the political, social, cultural and economic practices of his time and discarded the customs and usages belonging to the Age of Ignorance in order to found a new identity for the Arabs based on Islam (or Islamic principles). Prophet Muhammad differentiated his Islamic government from other groups and streams based on this new identity, drawing the line between Islamic identities with other identities. Although for the Islamic government he defined certain 'others,' he never dealt with them violently and always treated them with tolerance and leniency (Hamidi and Zanganeh, 2017).

### **The Change in the Concept of Jihad by Neo-Salafi**

The new version of Jihad is quite different from the traditional view. The worldwide (network of) radical Islamist groups have extended their philosophical ground based on a Jihad-oriented philosophy. Following the attack of September 11th 2001, the worldwide Jihad made its appearance in the international scene, which was perceived as equivalent to terrorism. The key point about the Jihadism is that it has been developed by non-governmental organizations rather than by Muslim countries. The ruling political Islam has not faced public opposition or the opposition of radical Islamist organizations who had doubt about the state's politics. Islamic governments did not change their governing systems and did not cut off their ties with non-Muslim countries, especially the US. The radical Islamic groups were not pleased with activities of their government and expanded their politics both against the dominant western powers and their allies in Muslim countries.

The Islamist parties upon coming to power tried to reconcile the tradition with modernity. They attempted to protect certain aspects of tradition while adopting modern measures and terms. However, the radical groups were not pleased with reconciliation. The radical discourse has two essential slogans: Islam is our fundamental solution and Quran our constitutional law. The new version of the Jihadist praxis is the ability to use technology. They believe that every mindful person can find a large amount of digital articles, writings, personal stories etc in the Internet and can follow the related websites and know about the latest goals and attacks and discuss and share ideas about the future goals of the Jihadist groups. The Al Qaeda website contains 3 thousand volumes books written by the Jihadi thinkers.

These texts provide them with the main teachings and doctrines and the religious legitimacy for their violent approaches. To propagate the key parameters of their ideology, the Jihadist thinkers have increased their accessibility so as now their messages are widely available in various media, including tapes, big (voluminous) books, CDs, webpages, etc. Their documents are translated by translation bureaus into several widely spoken languages. These teachings by emphasizing on a worldwide conspiracy against Islam and the need for a response are aimed to convince people of supporting or engaging in the acts of violence (Weiss and Hassan, 2016: 125).

In this regard, there are several basic reasons justifying the use of such Jihadist actions. The main reason is that there is a worldwide conspiracy against Islam. The Jihadi leaders think that the Muslims who live in Christian countries are faced with many challenges in their daily life. For this reason, Muslims cannot practice their religion (freely). Western civilization is in constant war with Islam, and we can see its



continuation everywhere. Western civilization is controlling minds and is busy with social engineering (on global scale). Western schools are preparing corrupt education for Muslim children. In western educational system, interactions between boys and girls are welcomed. Children are taught anti-Islamic topics such as evolution, simulation and other sensitive subjects. The children are prescribed to feast on Valentine's Day, Halloween, Christmas, and Thanksgiving Day. Western economics promotes money and the loan benefits. Thus, in the world economic order, anti-Islamic activities become justified. The international trade is used to exploit the Muslim's resources and workforce. In this condition, a compromise with the West is impossible for Muslims. The only possible way is to be prepared for the war (Zimmerman, 2017: 66).

They believe that all Jihadi organizations in order for to determine their position, should identify their enemies first. There is a worldwide complot to destroy Islam and every Muslim must take a share in the active Jihad. To them, Islam is being attacked under the New World Order. Jews and Western powers, especially the U.S., by a variety of means, including military, economic, political, anf information supply, are at war with Islam. Muslims should see these alliances in the enemy camp, and define their position accordingly. Jihadists believe that Islam has deviated from its true parh and Muslims face all kinds of humiliation, aggression, and harrassment. These new activists, criticizing the traditional Jihadi thinkers, claim that the Jihad historical ideology has been always subjected to personal judgment which drew away the Muslim's attention from urgent and essential issues. The new ideology also differs from Seyed Gotb's ideas on Jihad. Gotb in the beginning wanted to engage in a Jihad against the 'closer enemy,' i.e. the local government, before declaring Jihad on the 'more distant enemy,' i.e. Israel, the West, and especially the United States (Shahin Emad El-din 2014: 111).

### **The Last Jihadi Discourse and the Position of Economy in There**

The latest developments which have been observed in Iraq and Syria was the declaration of Jihad by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group as an independent country. They pursue the slogan of occupation and reinstating the Caliphate for the union of Muslims. And they introduce Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the Caliph and the 'leader,' of all Muslims (BBC news, 2014). This organization was made up of several radical Islamist organizations during the Syrian civil war. This group was formed in 2004 with the name of Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, under leadership of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, then the leader of Al Qaeda. In 2010, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, known as Abu Dava, took over the leadership of this organization. Following a dispute with Afghan leaders, he declared withdrawal from Al Qaeda and in 2013 changed the name of the organization to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (BBC news, 2014).

In March 2011, demonstrations against Bashar Assad's regime led to a civil war in Syria. Within a short period, radical groups such as Hezbollah and Al Qaeda in Iraq joined this struggle and the fighting extended to the whole country. At the same time, the sectarian conflicts in Iraq led to insurrection of some groups. The Iraqi branch of Al Qaeda, as a result, declared independence from Al Qaeda organization and proclaimed its new state as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. The Jihad statement called all Muslims by joining this organization to show their allegiance to the new Caliph (BBC news, 2014).

ISIS ran many human and logistic networks. In addition, those who fought beside ISIS make contact with each other later on and probably when they return to their country of origin, they will maintain their contact. The solidarity and fraternity is established through war in battle fronts and shapes their relationships which will be crucial for the future of the Jihadist movement. ISIS kept building its reputation and legitimacy in the general movement in order to attract more Muslims to join them (Zelin, 2014). This organization made effective use of social media. Indeed, ISIS enjoyed an unprecedented level of political and media



accessibility in the history of Jihadi movement's worldwide intending to gain the local support. This indicates that Muslims were ready for establishing the Caliphate. The ISIS current Jihadi approach differed from other Jihadi movements. Many of the Muslim groups and governmental and non-governmental organizations did not acknowledge credibility of the calling for Jihad in Syrian conflicts, since they believed that these conflicts are rather political than religious (Muhammad bin Ali, 2014). The fighting parties were Shiite and Sunni groups and the ideological opponents of Bashar Assad. Some of the religious leaders issued the order declaring ISIS guilty of sowing discord among Muslims (Ozdemir and Gurler, 2014). More specifically, they stated that there exists no war between Muslim and non-Muslim nor any threat to Islam. These religious leaders pointed out that contrary to other Jihadi movements, these people, in place of targeting foreign powers, have targeted Iraqi and Syrian people and Muslims. Many of the Islamist groups relative to other groups were tolerant and lenient, while ISIS lacked such tolerance to other Islamic orders, except to Sunni's. A

All churches were closed down in Raka. The Alavi and Shiite religious monuments were bombarded. In this Jihadi calling, many Muslims were killed. Non-Muslim communities in Syria and Iraq were attacked. Even though ISIS addresses foreign powers, particularly the UK and the US in its protests, its actual targets have been Muslim civilians and ethnic groups who live in Muslim territories (Muhammad Nasir, 2015: 222).

Among the Middle East experts there is consensus that this region is faced with serious problems and real challenges which have paralyzed it both politically and economically. Among the serious challenges are the political sentiments and deep religious beliefs. In fact, such feelings maintain a state of continuous conflict, instability and pain in the region. These sentiments slowed down the development towards political understanding and economic stability in the Middle East region where international politics and religion are tightly interwoven. In fact, the way the concept of Jihad is used today reflects these sentiments (Ali and Camp, 2004).

Jihad is one the most frequently applied instances in the current daily discourse on the Middle East and International politics. Different forces unintentionally have attributed this simple word to political and religious concepts. Jihad is an arabic word which signifies effort, endeavor, perseverance, and hardship. In common usage and in language in particular, it means the effort to carry out a work, hard work, or facing a challenging goal or responsibility. Tom Robbins (1990), in his history-oriented romance, predicts that we witness a revival of the old Crusades as a new holy war for stopping terrorism and recapturing the Promised Land. It is interesting that immediately after this prediction, the term terrorism and the Middle East topics became the most debated issues in the political discourse (for example, the First Gulf War, Palestinian second Intifada, the attack to Afghanistan in 2001, and the Second Gulf War against Iraq). There is the possibility that the reduced Cold War and the rise of political religion in the United States, which since the presidency of Ronald Reagan (2001) has rapidly grown, created a fertile environment for inventing a new enemy and its respective terminology.

However, there is no doubt that politicization and abuse of religion have caused different players to pursue seditious politics in- and outside the country. In fact, the recent rise in religious extremism in three religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam has caused disruption in constructive dialogues between civilizations and has inflamed feelings in the Middle East. Curie (2002: 42) argues that contemplation and rationality in the current debate on violence and war are twisted beyond knowledge, eloquence, and misunderstanding. He assumes that an important and logical understanding is only achieved through a clear vision of the past.





Therefore, CURIE argues that the attack of the Crusaders on the Middle East provides an incredible insight into the events of today and their underlying religious basis.

### **Economy, deprivation and human rights issues as the drivers of Takfiri Terrorism**

Today, the Middle East still fares in an environment of endless political rivalries, regional conflicts, and challenges, and is known as one of the major hotbeds for the terrorist groups and violent actions, especially after the terrorist operation of September the 11th. From this date on, the terrorism phenomenon has turned into the most crucial regional, and even global, problematic so as the fear of terrorism has taken nations all over the world. Sajedi (2016) refers to economy, deprivation and human rights as the contributing factors to expansion of terrorism in the Middle East.

**Economy:** economic factor is considered as one of the chief contributors to the rise of the terrorism. Although not necessarily all terrorists are poor, people who are distressed socially and economically are more likely to engage in violence. Destitute and poverty have always played a significant role in shaping terrorism. Unemployment, inflation and low wages, housing problem, and poor living condition may lead some people to violence and terrorism in order for by this means to express their dissatisfaction with their deteriorating socio-economic condition.

**Deprivation:** relative deprivation is used to explain the roots of socioeconomic and political crises. Deprivation signifies the unequal conditions (in terms of opportunities, wealth or resources) which have been designated for different parts of society. Studies have shown that some of the terrorists say they resorted to terrorist action as a result of long suffering from sociopolitical deprivation in order to bring some change to their hopeless condition.

**Human rights:** some authors believe the human rights violations are also a driving force behind terrorism. They maintain that terrorism often gets roots in environments where human rights are violated, giving the terrorists the pretext to exploit the instances of human rights violation to justify their presence (Saed, 2010: 64-65). The despotism of totalitarian regimes that violates basic human liberties is very conducive to shaping terrorism. When an oppressed nation under the rule of a despotic government that violates their rights raises and fights against a totalitarian regime in order to restore their legitimate rights, their struggles are legitimate and lawful. However, if in this struggle the life and property of civilians are put in danger, their actions are illegitimate and considered as terrorism.

**Globalization:** globalization, in terms of David Harvey, means the time-space compression. On this basis, global communications which are the result of technological advances in human life has culminated in a spatial compression (Caroline, 2011: 180). It implies enhanced and strengthened social bonds on a global scale which connect geographically scattered regions far away from each other in a way that occurrence of an important event at one part of the world also affects other regions.

Globalization goes on in several major areas, including economy, culture, international law, and IT and ICT.

**Globalization:** globalization which is different from globalization is also found to be responsible for the rise of terrorism. In the minds of the terrorists, globalization is the abuse of the imperialist powers for absolute domination over the world. It is in this way that their rule over the oppressed nations is established. The terrorists believe that the imperialist powers by implementing the globalization project not only seek to get their hands on natural resources of these nations, but also through cultural assimilation round centrality of the Western culture they mean to destroy other cultures.



### ***ISIS economic resources***

According to the research report of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), five major financial resources of ISIS are as follows:

1. The financial resources which are obtained by occupying places, for example by taking control of banks, oil and gas resources, taxes, extortion, and robbery from capital resources;
2. Taking hostages to receive money in exchange;
3. Donations received via non-profit organizations;
4. Financial and logistic support provided by foreign fighters; and
5. Receiving capital through modern communication networks.

The US Department of Treasury estimated that in 2014, ISIS received \$100 million dollars from the sales of crude oil, petrochemical products to the brokers who, in turn, smuggled them to Iran and Turkey or sold them to Syrian government. The revenue of this organization on hostage releases in exchange for money in this year was estimated to be about 20 million dollars. In addition, the taxes and toll which are taken from people living in ISIS controlled regions is another source of income for this group. They also gained money by attacking banks, looting and wholesale of the looted antiques, and selling or supervising livestock and wheat trade. Moreover, they received money by levying taxes (Jizyah) on the Christians subjects living in these regions and selling the kidnapped girls as sexual slaves. Thousands of women and girls belonging to the religious minority Yazidis after the capture of Sinjar in northern Iraq became slaves and were sold on the market (BBC, 2015).

Al Arabiya channel reported that ISIS armed members after capturing the city of Mosul plundered the city's banks, obtaining about \$429 million dollars from this plunder. In so doing, according to Al Arabiya, ISIS became at the time the richest terrorist group in the world (Entekhab News Agency, 2015). Before capturing Mosul, ISIS assets in cash were \$875 million dollars.

As Guardian reported, following the occupation of Mosul, ISIS assets became over several billion dollars. After plundering the banks and financial institutions and taking possession of the military equipment in this city, nearly another \$1.5 billion dollars should be added to the earlier assets of ISIS, (idem).

### ***Oil export***

On 5 July 2014, ISIS transported its first oil cargo and exported it through Kurdistan of Iraq. Hundred tankers of crude oil, \$12-14 thousand dollars per tanker, were sold by ISIS to finance its operations. The people who buy oil from this group bring it through the roads controlled by this group and through the cities of Kefri or Qadir Karam, to refineries, or in cooperation with checkpoints through the city of Makhmur they bring it to Kurdistan. They also at this time had the control of all the important oil and gas fields of Syria in Deir ez-Zor province bordered to northern Iraq. ISIS sold the oil of this province for \$12 dollars a barrel. Before this, when the oil wells of Deir ez-Zor were in the hands of other insurgent groups, each barrel oil was sold for \$30 to \$50 dollars. One of the chief sources of ISIS income are the oil and gas they rob from the Syrian underground resources. Most of the buyers of this oil and gas are the fuel intermediates who send the bought oil to European destinations (Entekhab News Agency, 2014: 2).

### ***Issue of banknotes and passports***

ISIS group after declaration of the Caliphate and change of the name to "Islamic State" in the regions under its control, embarked on minting coins and issuing new banknotes and passports. Immediately after declaring the formation of the Islamic Caliphate, ISIS has published its new flag (and hymn) in 23 living



world languages. A number of the local media gave the news of ISIS newly issued banknotes of one, five, and ten Dinar in Mosul, Tikrit, and parts of Diyala province. The website of the Turkish newspaper Yeni Şafak (New Dawn) earlier gave the news of the first official passport issued by ISIS for 11 thousands of its members in Mosul of Iraq (the website of the Islamic Republic of Iran News Network, 2014). On 14 November 2014, ISIS announced that it intends to bring its own currency into the monetary exchanges. The new currency is named 'Islamic Dinar.' A site close to the Islamic State wrote that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-appointed Caliph of the Islamic State, has issued the order for minting the new coins in order to replace the 'current despotic monetary system' which is after the 'model of Western economy' and serves to enslave Muslims. The Shura Council of the Islamic State approved al-Baghdadi's decree.

### ***Extortion as an economic Jihad***

Christian Arve, the former deputy executive director of Lafarge Company said: since the end of the summer of 2012, this cement manufacturing company has been paying some amounts of money to ISIS for its security. He also said: one person was designated for negotiations with ISIS people and this person paid between \$80 to \$100 thousand dollars to ISIS each month. Bruno Pecheux, the former CEO of Lafarge subsidiary in Syria referred to the name of ISIS in the internal dealings of the company. He confirmed the sum of \$20 thousand dollars per month. Le Monde newspaper, in a report hereon, writes: Lafarge managers have been in constant contact with the officials in the French ministry of foreign affairs and the members of the French cabinet. Lafarge Company, for continuing its operation in Syria, have had the green light from the French authorities. Christian Arve added: "French authorities asked this company to remain in Syria and prepare itself for the post-war activities and take the country's market in its hand." In September 2017, the General Prosecution Office of Paris announced: "some documents about payment of financial bribes by Lafarge officials to ISIS in 2012 have reached the French judicial authorities." The general prosecution office added that one of the interrogated Lafarge employees said: this deal between Lafarge officials and ISIS was made in Gaziantep province of Turkey, 37km from Lafarge factory in Kobani, Syria." This eye witness also said: the US and Qatari governments knew about this deal and supported it" (Mehr News Agency, 2017).

### **3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Based on the conducted study, it seems there is a consensus among the Middle East experts that this region is faced with serious problems and real challenges which have paralyzed it politically and economically. Among the major challenges are political sentiments driven by deep religious beliefs. Such sentiments have led to unceasing strife, instability and pain in the region. These sentiments slowed down the development process towards a political understanding and economic stability in the Middle East region where international politics and religion are entangled one into another. In fact, the way the concept of Jihad is applied today reflects these very sentiments (Ali and Camp, 2004).

Jihad is one of the most frequently used instances in the current daily discourse on the Middle East religion and International politics. Different forces unintentionally have attributed this simple word to politically and religiously laden concepts. Jihad is an arabic word which signifies effort, endeavor, perseverance, and hardship. In common usage and in language in particular, it denotes the effort to carry out a work, hard work, or facing a challenging goal or responsibility. Tom Robbins (1990), in his history-oriented romance, predicts that we are witnessing a revival of the old Crusades as a new holy war for stopping terrorism and





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#### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Authenticity of the texts, honesty and fidelity has been observed.

#### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

Mohammad Ghaneie, Saeed Eslamee and Fatemeh Soleimani Poulak contributed to the design and implementation of the research, to the analysis of the results and to the writing of the manuscript.

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Author/s confirmed no conflict of interest.