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# Dynamics of Global Jihad Narrative: A Case Study of Al-Qaeda and ISIS



Regional Studies  
Vol 38, Issue 4  
pp.83-104  
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<http://irs.org.pk>

P-ISSN: 0254-7988

E-ISSN: 2959-5459

Date of Acceptance: 2 October 2020

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## Abstract

*The difference in approaches to jihad from Al-Qaeda to ISIS has created new transnational challenges. This paper explores the multiple narratives of ongoing global jihad and the multiple dynamics of each narrative manifested by Al-Qaeda and ISIS. However, it is agreed that the ultimate goal of each narrative and dynamic is rooted more deeply in furthering political agendas without having much to do with Islam. This paper argues that jihadist groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS must be studied separately to draw reliable conclusions and further develop the knowledge surrounding violent Islamist groups. The paper suggests that to fight the existing narratives adopted by these and other jihadist organisations, an alternative narrative should be developed. However, this should be kept in mind that the alternative narrative cannot fully replace the existing jihadist narratives.*

**Keywords:** Jihadism, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, narratives, self-proclaimed agenda.

## Introduction

The term Jihadism is a newly coined expression of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Previous research from some of the Western authors links Jihadism with the militant Salafi strand. It is interpreted as, “the waging of global jihad,” i.e., a core feature of the Salafist ideology. The construct of Jihadism has often been viewed as challenging to define because it came to become a part of the discourse on Jihad as a buzzword; with no single broadly recognised meaning.<sup>1</sup> The term jihad

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along with various other Islamic notions is abundantly misunderstood globally. It fundamentally means 'to struggle' and not 'holy war' as interpreted by the West. The Arabic expression for 'holy war' would be 'Harb-al-Muqadasa'. However, the West has come to interpret the term as such since it suited them better. For instance, in 2002, President George W Bush, during his State of the Union Address, used expressions like "axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world," and words such as 'crusades' to point towards any potential holy wars. The word jihad appears frequently in the Quran with and without military connotations, often in line with the idiomatic expression "striving in the path of God (al-jihad fi sabil Allah)."<sup>2</sup> Enlightening about those who take the way of Jihad, the Quran goes on to say, "Those who believe, and have left their homes and striven with their wealth and their lives in Allah's way are of much greater worth in Allah's sight. These are they who are triumphant." (Al-Quran, 9:20)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is believed to have said that there are two types of Jihad. Jihad Al-Akbar, which is commonly known as the 'Greater Jihad' and involves an individual's continuous and never-ending struggle against his *nafs* or soul.

Quran expresses the three kinds of *nafs* as follows;

- Nafs-ul-Ammarah (12:53)
- Nafs-ul-Lawwamah (75:2)
- Nafs-ul-Mutmainnah (89:27-28)

The first one incites a man to do evil, the second to do what is morally correct, and the third is considered closest to Allah, i.e., the one extremely pure. Defending oneself against harmful external influences, i.e., Nafs-ul-Ammarah is explained as 'Jihad Al-Akbar' in the Holy Quran.

One tradition holds that Prophet Mohammad said after returning from a war, "We now return from the small struggle (Jihad Al-Asghar) to the big struggle (Jihad Al-Akbar)." His companions asked,

"O Prophet of God, what is the big struggle?" He replied, "The struggle against *nafs*." <sup>3</sup> Jihad Al-Akbar was said to be much more important than Jihad Al-Asghar, which is commonly referred to as the 'lesser Jihad'. This type of jihad includes the struggle by Muslims in building a fair Islamic society or broadly it could be a war against the infidels.<sup>4</sup>

The origin of modern jihad in the Muslim world can be traced back to two early 20th century figures who initiated powerful Islamic revivalist movements in their respective countries. Hasan al-Banna of Egypt (Muslim Brotherhood) and Syed Abul Ala Maududi (Jamaat-i-Islami) of Pakistan sought to restore the Islamic ideal of merging religion and state. Both blamed the Western idea of the separation of religion and politics for the decline of Muslim societies. This was, to a great extent, in response to colonialism and imperialist forces. The ideology of the two triggered movements in the two Muslim countries eventually leading to strong intellectual traditions.

Since 9/11, the West has been inclined to speak of jihad and its associated branches in terms of self-suiting interpretations. It is observed that the Western media and literature has been particularly linking all extremist and terrorist activities with the Islamist military movements. For the most part, only a few Western academic experts have spoken about the actual essence of jihad. Whereas the rest fail to understand the legitimate meaning of jihad and conveniently inherit the interpretations adopted and practised by a jihadist organisation like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).<sup>5</sup>

This paper aims to explain jihadism as a phenomenon in and of itself, by viewing and carefully analysing the essence and contours of the movement. This is a task that requires a deeper understanding of jihadism in singularity, subsiding its explanation as a subset of some other major structure. However, to do so, a thorough insight into the nuances of various frames of analysis, i.e., terrorism, Islamism, and violent extremism is imperative.<sup>6</sup>

Terrorist groups, particularly the ones that associate with self-proclaimed Jihad, can be divided into three types based on their approaches and relative capabilities. These associations are as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

First Level	Second Level	Third Level
Activities of the terrorist groups are restricted within a state, however, if they are left unchecked they can affect peace at the international level as well.	Terrorists groups operate at the regional level or their offensive acts cross at least one boundary which is international.	Terrorist groups that operate at the international level.
Example: Afghan Taliban They do not have a global agenda and their focus has been on the local politics of Afghanistan	Example: Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan as it collaborates with the East Turkestan Islamic Movement and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.	Example: ISIS and Al-Qaeda as both have a global jihadist agenda.

Categories of Terrorist Groups<sup>7</sup>

Referring to the figure above, the third level terrorist groups are transnational. Al-Qaeda and ISIS are their principal organisations as both have a global jihadist agenda. This research examines the jihadist threats posed by these two groups by discussing their ideologies and strategies before it goes on to present a comparative analysis of the two groups.

Understanding the Dynamics of the Global Jihad Narrative

The term jihad came to be associated with terrorism in the West, particularly the US, following 9/11. This association can be traced

back to the West's adherence to a single kind of Jihad, i.e., 'jihad bis saif' (jihad with the sword).<sup>8</sup>

Conditioning the recruits' minds against Americanisation and Europeanisation as devils' propaganda is a critical practice during the recruitment process of terrorist organisations. Brainwashing potential recruits with an attractive vision of heaven drives them to wage jihad against evil prevailing in their societies. These organisations then call themselves Mujahids to comfort themselves with the idea that all their actions are for the sake of Allah.<sup>9</sup>

When Prophet Muhammad was in Mecca, the revelations urged him to practice peace and tolerance. However, later on, when he was forced by the pagan tribes to migrate to Madinah, the revelations became more militaristic. Since it was the need of the time for him to unify all other tribes of Arabia and to fight back the infidels if attacked.

The passages from the Quran that were revealed later highlight the circumstances in which Muslims could resort to *Qital*, i.e., fighting. Conflated use of the terms 'Jihad' and 'Qital' has been influential in the prevalent confusion about jihad in the Madani verses as references to armed struggle. Jihad and Qital have significantly different connotations in the Holy Quran. However, they are seemingly referenced without the context of the original revelation by the Jihadists. The occasional (re)interpretation of the original text deviates the essence of the original meaning of the verses. Similarly, sometimes, quoting just an excerpt of the original verse in an attempt to justify an act results in a misleading interpretation of the original meaning. For instance, the Verse of the Sword (9:5), which is the most commonly used Quranic reference is often shortened to "Kill the idolaters (polytheists) wherever you find them. . . lie in wait for them at every place of ambush," leaving out the remaining verse "But if they turn [to God] . . . let them go their way."<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the 'contextual reference' to a particular verse is either ignored or goes unquoted. For instance, in the aforesaid verse, the permission 'to kill' was put forth when Muslims were being persecuted at the hands of pagan Arabs and had reached a point of desperation. The Prophet's (PBUH) companions were frustrated as to when will divine help reach them. The supplication of Prophet (PBUH) was thus answered.

The Quranic and Hadith citations often quoted by Jihadists depict only a minute fraction of these works, which ironically ends up becoming a representation of the entire set of Islamic teachings.

## **Different Frames of Analysis**

### **Terrorism**

The 9/11 US bombings were described by George W Bush as evil and shameful acts of terror. He declared Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) with the US at its forefront. The notion of terrorism and a deep-rooted knowledge about its various facets was integral to initiate such global combat. That said, many critics argue that focusing on the idea of terrorism can have its disadvantages given the fact that terrorism in the military sense cannot be regarded as a proper opponent. It is a destructive ploy that can be used by multiple actors.<sup>11</sup>

The second recurring problem with terrorism is the challenge to fully define it as there is no single universally accepted definition of the term. The US Code of Federal Regulations defines terrorism as "the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives."<sup>12</sup>

In the context of jihadism, there are two crucial limitations to the notion of terrorism. Firstly, terrorism cannot be regarded as the underlying reason or the justification for Jihadism. Terrorism is merely a tactic in the jihadist tool chest for the achievement of larger goals,

which includes capturing territories, establishing the rule, and removal of governments inclined towards the West.<sup>13</sup>

Secondly, jihadists sometimes consider it dignifying to use the word terrorism as it is the translation of the Arabic word *Irhab*. What goes conveniently ignored is the fact that the word *Irhab* occurs in the Holy Quran in the passages that refer to warfare. The relevant verse of Surah Al-Anfaal (8:57), says: "If ye gain the mastery over them in war, disperse, with them, those who follow them, that they may remember." This part of the Surah urges the Muslims to act against *Mushriks*, the hypocrites, especially the ones who broke the truce with severity and resoluteness to serve as a deterrent for other enemies of Islam. Therefore, Jihadists often tend to state that Islam does not only allow a Muslim to perform terrorism but also encourages it.<sup>14</sup>

### **Violent Extremism**

Violent extremism, just like terrorism, is difficult to define and paradoxically so, the two have been used interchangeably many a time. The US Countering Violent Extremism Act of 2015 explains violent extremism as ideologically motivated terrorist activities. Also, many other scholars who try to define violent extremism often end up linking it with terrorism.<sup>15</sup>

Theoretically, violent extremism is a rather ambiguous construct. While its advocates rightly emphasise the importance of ideology, basing their argument on a single ideology has been an enormous challenge. Thus, the concept comprises a wide range of revolting actors, from eco-terrorists to far-right extremists to jihadists. It is frequently suggested that those drawn to violent extremism are socially isolated, mentally disturbed, or otherwise delusional. While taking such factors into account in a particular context might be important, jihadism cannot be explained or understood with such a psychological niche as its underlying driving force.<sup>16</sup>

## **Islamism**

Those trying to look for a specific ideology that fundamentally explains the violent acts of Al-Qaeda and ISIS have evaluated several designations stretching from radical Islam to Islamism to Islamic fascism. The relationship between Islam and Islamism is contested within Islam itself. Islamism has come to be interpreted as 'political Islam' or 'radical Islam', at least in Western literature. In this context, Islamism is an ideology with a political agenda that differentiates it from the actual teachings of the religion Islam. It is, however, noteworthy that Islamism emerged as a powerful political force from 1980 onwards with the US-led efforts to oust USSR from Afghanistan. Islamists seek political power since, in their worldview, religion cannot be confined to the 'private' sphere alone but finds its highest expression in the politics of popular mobilisation and social reforms. The most controversial aspect of Islamism is its association with militancy and violence in general and terrorism in particular. Groups like Hamas, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Boko Haram are viewed as exponents of Islamist terrorism. The principal argument of this Islamist militancy lies in the notion of Jihad, to be specific, Jihad Bis-Saif (Jihad by the sword).<sup>17</sup>

After 9/11, the term Islamism gained popularity, mainly in the American media. Islamism is a term encompassing several modern Islamic political movements. Thus, Islamism and Jihadism cannot be regarded as synonymous. All Jihadists can be called Islamists but very few Islamists can be grouped as Jihadists. Jihadists unlike Islamists renounce the legality of the state and warn, as a matter of doctrine, continual violence until they have their way.<sup>18</sup>

## **Jihadism**

Before delving further into the nuances of Jihadism, it is noteworthy that the concept of Jihad remained dormant for several centuries (at least since the 12<sup>th</sup> century) until it was revived by the West, more specifically, the US, during the cold war. The simplest



history of jihadism can be traced back to December 1979. US in its bid to confront the former USSR turned Pakistan into a training ground for the warriors or then called 'the Mujahedeen' from over 48 Muslim countries. The mujahedeen who received training on Pakistani soil were sent to Afghanistan. After successfully causing the Soviets to retreat, these groups began fighting for political ascendancy in Kabul. There has been no looking back ever since. They exploited the teachings of Islam and presented them as the justification for their brutal acts. The first group that emerged out of the Mujahedeen was Al-Qaeda. It developed its ideology on the basis of Jihadism, a distinct subset of Sunni Islamism carrying a unique approach to politics and religion.<sup>19</sup>

The jihadists consider that the Muslims and Muslim countries (who in the worldview of Al-Qaeda and Islamic State are like a brotherhood) to be under the influence of the Western culture. In their view, the ruling governments in most Muslim countries had comfortably aligned themselves with the Western structures to attain their defined goals. However, a thorough cleansing from Western styles of governance and state affairs was vital to restore the idea of a greater Muslim brotherhood to its former glory.

The jihadists set their approach of strict monotheism, i.e., *tawhid*, against all these flaws. Their approach preached no room for diversion from their strict beliefs and unswerving commitment to an armed struggle or Jihad against their state as well as other countries and people whom they deem to be non-believers. Thus, rejectionism is the Jihadist hallmark.<sup>20</sup>

## **Jihad Narrative of Al-Qaeda**

### **Ideology**

The ideology of Al-Qaeda extends a single but unifying narrative, which dictates certain roles to its followers by reinforcing identity and mutualism in the Jihadists.<sup>21</sup> Al-Qaeda's central message

reads: the West is always at war with Islam. For the Al-Qaeda leadership, the lost fame, prestige, self-respect, and integrity of Muslims could only be reclaimed by following the strategies devised by the Al-Qaeda leadership. The basic characteristics of the Jihad narrative put forth by Al-Qaeda can be summed up as follows:

1. There is a basic grievance, i.e., the Muslim world is in chaos and a Zionist-Christian alliance is held responsible for most, if not all, that is wrong in Muslim countries and the way Muslims are humiliated, discriminated against, and/or mistreated in the world. The collusion of corrupt Muslim rulers with the West keeps Muslims impotent. That is to say that rulers of Muslim countries and those who follow them have turned away from True Islam by allowing Western ways in Muslim lands.
2. There is a vision of the good society, i.e., a single political entity—the Caliphate—that replaces corrupt, apostate rulers under Western influence. The Caliphate is and must be run in true accordance with the Sharia (i.e., Islamic Law) wherever there are Muslims so that Allah's will is enforced and order is restored.
3. There is a path from the grievance to the realisation of the vision, i.e., the eradication. This includes the heroic role of Al-Qaeda in overturning the Westerns influence and leading a nation into Jihad with the greater aim of restoring Islam and its followers to their former glory.<sup>22</sup>

### **Strategy**

The core strategy of Al-Qaeda revolves around progressive destabilisation. Gaining and controlling territorial areas has been less significant to the short-term strategy of Al-Qaeda, unlike ISIS. However, in line with ISIS, Al-Qaeda follows the Sunni Salafist school of thought and has little tolerance for Shiites and other minority groups in Islam. Another strategy that Al-Qaeda follows is the formation of Jihadist coalitions. These coalitions are formed when certain Jihadist groups

espouse the ideology of Al-Qaeda.<sup>23</sup> The strategy of Al-Qaeda for calling Mujahids to action is that it allows them to stay at their native place. This allows them to act more efficiently since they are aware of the areas, economic sites, political leaders, and places and the more populated areas.<sup>24</sup>

In 2010, Al-Qaeda launched its first-ever digital magazine, which was named *Inspire*. The level of advertisements and interactive pictures that were published in *Inspire* were of high quality and it had the potential to invoke lone wolf attacks against the West among the Jihadists. Furthermore, *Inspire* provided religious advice and justifications for carrying out these attacks. Most importantly and, in fact, most disturbingly, it reflected upon steps on how Mujahedeen could succeed in their missions. For instance, for encouraging lone-wolf attacks, *Inspire* dedicated an entire section of the magazine to teach the Mujahids bomb-making and on the handling of guns. This section was named 'open-source Jihad'. It openly provided guidelines for making bombs to inflict maximum damage upon the Jews and the West. For example, when the Tsarnaev Brothers prepared themselves for the Boston Bombings, they consulted this section of the *Inspire* magazine.<sup>25</sup>

## **Jihad Narrative of ISIS**

### **Ideology**

ISIS ideology lays the foundations for its followers to devise policies and strategies. The Jihad narrative of ISIS is based on Jihadi Salafism and accords a general guideline for its activities including implementation of its ideology in recruitment and jihadist propaganda.

Salafism is a very conservative branch of the Sunni sect of Islam. It advocates a return to the culture and traditions of the Salaf who were the scholars of the first three generations that came after Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The doctrine of Salafism revolves around

the concept of following all the traditions prevalent in the historical period of Islam and a belief that the present world should be based and ordered on those concepts.<sup>26</sup>

ISIS rejects innovations in religion through *Bida'h* and supports the implementation of strict Sharia laws. Combining the ideology and tenets of Salafism, ISIS ideology is primarily based on carrying out Salafi Jihadism, which states that there is a need for Muslims to perform Jihad against apostates and return to the true beliefs of Sunni Islam.

Other noteworthy features of the ISIS ideology are as follows:

1. The caliphate of early Islam should be restored to purify Muslims so that they can come out of the oppression of crusaders and all Muslims should take an oath to pledge loyalty to the Caliphate;
2. Any Muslim committing apostasy should be killed;
3. Muslims should strictly follow the precepts that were given by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his immediate followers; and
4. Belief in purifying the world by killing all the non-believers.<sup>27</sup>

### **Strategy**

ISIS views itself in state of a war with the West, particularly in the Middle Eastern regions and assumes itself to be the sole protector of all the Sunni Muslims present around the globe. The primary goal of ISIS has always been territorial gains and establishing its government, unlike Al-Qaeda. ISIS launched its first digital magazine in 2014 named *Dabiq*, which gave a five-step process of how a Jihadi base could be established in a fragile state including recruitment of members and initiation of local chaos and disturbances. Although ISIS has successfully been able to form alliances with other armed groups in Syria and Iraq, it has always acted independently and unilaterally.

In the government of the Caliphate, ISIS was able to establish several schools, hospitals, courts, and other social services to facilitate people living under their commandment. The fighters who were foreigners were given administrative posts in the governments to encourage them to recruit more mujahids. In the initial phases of its Caliphate, ISIS engaged itself in the mass killings of the Muslims of other sects particularly Shiites and Yazidis. For instance, prisoners were often publicly beheaded and burned and their images and videos were posted on social media to generate more terror in the minds of people. Through the content in its magazine and social media, ISIS has actively encouraged lone-wolf attacks. Like Al-Qaeda, ISIS also provides detailed information on how bombs can be made in homes and where to stab a human to ensure that he will die.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike Al-Qaeda, ISIS demands its members to migrate from their respective places and start living in the territory of the ISIS Caliphate and it portrays that Muslims are only safe under the shade of the Islamic State. Also, ISIS demands of all its believers to leave the lands of the West as they believe that Jihad is not possible when a person is living in the land of *kufr* or sin. ISIS uses different methods to motivate people to attract them to join it. For instance, it promises its members that they will enter paradise if they engage in Jihad and sacrifice their lives. Another strategy ISIS adopts is that it overwhelmingly portrays all men as equal, whether they are black or white, rich or poor, Arab or non-Arab, a Westerner or Easterner.

### **Comparative Analysis of Al-Qaeda and ISIS Jihadist Narratives**

For presenting a detailed comparison of the jihadist narrative of Al-Qaeda and ISIS, it is important to analyse the statements highlighting the acts and incidents perpetrated and claimed. Also, these statements shed light on their distinct jihadist goals. It is also important to understand the meanings created in light of these statements.

This section of the paper discusses the strategies of both Al-Qaeda and ISIS. In doing so, it compares and analyses selected texts statements and frequently used words by these jihadist organisations. The reviewed literature indicates that the most frequently used words by the leaders of Al-Qaeda and ISIS are Allah, today, Jihad, all, Islamic, people, and Muslims.<sup>29</sup>

*"Support the religion of Allah through jihad in the path of Allah."*

(Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, 2014)

It can be seen in the above statement by one of the ISIS leaders that it gives clear directives to its followers and encourages them to wage Jihad in the path of Allah. Thus, great emphasis is laid on the religious facets, which the ISIS leadership has seemingly moulded for its benefits and issued them as fatwas to justify their gruesome acts.

*"By Allah, if you disbelieve in democracy, secularism, nationalism, as well as all the other garbage and ideas from The West, and rush to your religion and creed, then by Allah, you will own the earth, and the east and west will submit to you."*

(Al'Adnani, 2014)

As evident in the statement above, ISIS leaders frequently urge their followers that Allah has divided the world into two spheres, i.e., the East and the West. The West consists of nations that are disbelievers while the nations in the East are the followers of Allah and are true to his religion.

Additionally, ISIS often repeats the words Caliphate and earth and emphasises that Allah wants only Caliphate to be established on His earth. Thereby, ISIS always stresses the establishment of the Caliphate. For them, true expansion of their jihadist narrative is impossible until and unless they have a proper geographical area under their rule where they can establish the caliphate and invite their followers to lead their lives in the guiding light of Shariah.<sup>30</sup>

On the contrary, the following is a statement by one of the leaders of Al-Qaeda, which shows how these leaders try to create an impact on the minds of their followers.

*"...the name of the American government and the names of Clinton and Bush directly bring to our minds the pictures of one-year-old children with their heads cut off. The hearts of the Muslims are filled with hatred towards the United States of America...Our people in the Arabian Peninsula will send the president of America messages with no words because he does not understand them."*

*(Bin Ladin – Interview with CNN: May 12, 1997)*

Al-Qaeda emphasises that Muslims have suffered due to American involvement in the Muslim world and also mentions that the US is being led by incompetent leaders. From the invasion of Afghanistan by the US and removal of the Taliban to the Iraqi operation, both these jihadist organisations have declared the US as their main target and aim at punishing and destroying the US as, presumably, the sons of Islam are prepared for this battle.

*"I say to the American army, don't be cowards and attack us with drones. Instead send your soldiers, the ones we humiliated in Iraq. We will humiliate them everywhere, God willing, and raise the flag of Allah in the White House and on entire Earth".*

*(Abu Mosa, 2014)*

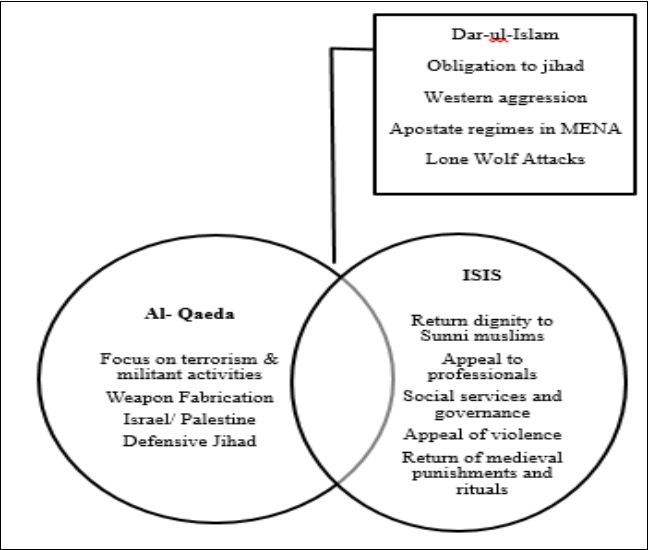
The repetitive use of the word 'earth' in the narrative of both these organisations is pivotal as it refers to the entire world. Al-Qaeda propagates that one of its goals is to spread Allah's law and establish Islam everywhere on the earth. ISIS also enunciates that the whole universe belongs to Allah and it must submit to Allah as He alone is the master of this entire universe.<sup>31</sup>

After analysing the statements of many leaders of both these organisations, it is clear that they use religion as a political instrument to advance their agendas. Hence, it plays a very crucial role in their

jihad narrative. Their methods to pursue their narratives are coercion, intimidation, violence, etc.

The following figure compares and summarises the jihadist narratives of Al-Qaeda and ISIS.

**Figure 2**  
**Competing Jihadist Narratives of Al-Qaeda and ISIS**



Source: Compiled by the Author

**Conclusion**

While analysing the jihadist narrative of ISIS and Al-Qaeda, it can be concluded that no single analytical framework is good enough to predict the future course of Jihad and these jihadist groups. That said, these groups, especially ISIS, may further exploit the social and economic grievances in the conflict zones in the times that follow. Additionally, in future, the agendas of these terrorist groups will be shaped by how, where, and to what extent foreign powers are intruding in the domestic matters of a state. These Jihadist movements will continue to rise until the local, regional, and global flashpoints are not resolved.



Trump's declaration to shift the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem has virtually ended hopes for a two-state solution. The said decision will significantly impact the actions of these Jihadist groups as well. A commitment to Palestine binds the narrative of these jihadist groups together. Expelling Jews from Palestine is one of the main Jihadist narratives of Al-Qaeda as highlighted in Figure 2. Alternatively, ISIS has a less elaborate discourse on Palestine than Al-Qaeda. It often uses images depicting Al-Aqsa and the Dome of Rock Mosques in its propaganda videos.

The global and regional powers must take steps individually and cohesively to combat terrorism. A noteworthy factor to bear in mind while devising the combat strategies is that Al-Qaeda and ISIS are non-state actors, which makes their access to media outlets rather limited. As a result, the discourse based solely on their words of mouth holds less weightage for the general masses in comparison to the words of the state leaders. Also, since electronic media and social media are controlled and censored by state actors, attempts must be made at an institutional level to curtail posts such as speeches of jihadist leaders on social media outlets in the first place.

It can be argued that to fight the many existing narratives adopted by Jihadist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS, an alternative narrative needs to be developed. Arguably, this alternative narrative must be able to satisfy and build bridges between people from all factions of society. Such dialogue should bring together all the stakeholders, i.e., Muslims and non-Muslims, religious and political leaders, victims, scholars, civil society representatives, and most importantly former militants. It should draw constructive outputs from the critical voices of all the relevant citizens who have an interest in becoming a part of designing solutions to the underlying problems that escalate extremism in the first place. However, this should be kept in mind that the alternative narrative cannot fully replace the existing Jihadist narratives.

**Recommendations**

Considering how complex and intense the jihadist movements have become, there is not a single policy that can help tackle the situation. However, to deal with these jihadist movements, crafting policies and implementing them is a complex challenge. One cannot end terrorism by simply fighting against it. A military approach can upset but cannot permanently disassemble these jihadist organisations, which are initially born out of deep political and social discontent. The following table provides a summary as to which policies should be adopted with a detailed description of each policy.

**Table 1**  
**Policy Options to Fight Jihadism**

<b>Policy Option</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Collaboration</b>	International co-operations and coalitions both with regional and international allies by keeping in mind that partnerships involve compromises and sacrifices.
<b>Political Solutions</b>	Attaining political stability through the collaboration of political figures and the military.
<b>The Sectarian Divide</b>	Policies targeting the diffusion of sectarian tensions should be adopted.
<b>Regional Rivalries</b>	Sunni Saudi and Shiite Iranian and regional rivalries should be addressed and peace talks should be initiated.
<b>Human Factors</b>	Social and economic indicators of growth should be addressed and improved.
<b>Troubled Landscape</b>	Extremists operate in areas that are usually remote and less accessible. So, while drafting policies these areas should be defined properly and should be targeted.
<b>The Long View</b>	It should be understood that defeating Jihadism is a time consuming and costly process, which needs addressing and eliminating the root causes such as the Palestinian issue.

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