

*Mudassir Farooqi*

*Forman Christian College-University, Pakistan<sup>1</sup>*

*Robert M. Dover*

*University of Hull, United Kingdom<sup>2</sup>*

*ORCID: 0000-0002-2780-9729*

## **BRANDING OF JIHADI TERROR. AN ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY UNDERSTANDING OF JIHADI TERRORISM**

### **■ INTRODUCTION**

The concept of terrorism has evolved with the emergence of new terrorist strategies and new organisations and splinter groups. For example, the occurrence of the Islamic State (IS), its jihadist ideology and far more acceptant approach to extreme violence and killing marked a segway into a new era. The group strived to achieve the status of a political entity and to create a new form of a state-like organisation, through the initial tactics of extreme violence and information-led terrorism in Iraq and Syria. Although the scholarly and policy-making communities strived hard to investigate jihadists, they did not successfully foresee the caliphate emerging out of a jihadi terror in Iraq and Syria. A vast number of studies referred to the rise of IS and highlighted its branding and propaganda tactics (Lister 2014; Saltman, Winter 2014; Stern, Berger 2015). However, they missed out on the organized form of jihadism and its organizational strategy of violence, as well as its sophisticated use of associative network memory in branding the organized jihadi terror of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our research argues that whilst there is a plethora of approaches to political violence within international relations and security studies, the limitations and pitfalls within each limit their explanatory power in revealing jihadist violence. The existing approaches treat jihadism as both static and relatively simple reality, when it is a complex phenomenon deeply woven into societies. To address these limitations in the literature, the present study challenges these conventional wisdom and proposes a new interdisciplinary understanding of the roots, nature, and manifestations of jihadism and the resulting violence

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<sup>1</sup> E-mail: mudassirfarooqi@fccollege.edu.pk

<sup>2</sup> E-mail: R.M.Dover@hull.ac.uk

and terrorism from the prevailing view in the organizational science paradigm. Therefore, the interdisciplinary organizational approach of this research aims to achieve the following primary aim which is to examine the branding proposition of jihadism and how it relates to organizational theory and the organizational sciences principles of social entrepreneurship (SE).

This research is premised around organizational theory, as applied to jihadist movements. Organisational theory has been studied from a plurality of methodological perspectives. We centred our approach on identifying a series of case study movements and establishing the extent to which the external identification of the group aligned to the group's self-identification. In the foundational research phase, one of the authors spent six months in total, across two field trips, interviewing security officials and third sector workers in a contested region of Pakistan, bordering Afghanistan, to gain primary practitioner testimony around jihadist movements. It was here that we began to refine our thesis concerning the possible utility of social entrepreneurship to counterterrorism initiatives. The insights gained during this field work helped to inform our extensive survey of the secondary source literature and observational studies of the brand propositions and supportive marketing collateral used by these groups to connect with their audiences and in striking fear and sometimes revulsion in their target adversaries. We have not presented our interview material in this article because it is not directly relevant to the argument, we are presenting concerning the logics behind and formation of brand propositions and brand values. What we do in this article is demonstrate how the academic field and communities of practice have underplayed the value of organisational theory and branding, and how resolving this leads to a plausible alternative, and less militaristic counterterrorism initiatives.

Our research finds that the branding of jihadi terrorism is staged on a simple, associative expression of Islamic faith and praising God (Allah in Arabic) as 'Allah o Akbar! Allah o Akbar', meaning God is supreme, often translated into American and British English as 'God is great'. Within 'brand jihad' the chanting of 'Allah o Akbar' was present in the Westminster Bridge attack in London in 2017 where five people were killed and uncertainty about the scale of the attack remained for twenty-four hours. Furthermore, a van was used to kill another seven people in London, whilst a subway was bombed in Saint Petersburg leaving twelve dead. A similar attack, using a truck in a public location occurred in Stockholm, killing five more people. On May 22, 2017, Manchester welcomed American pop star Ariana Grande, and a Libyan born suicide attacker left twenty-two music fans dead. In August 2017, a van was used to kill sixteen people in a popular tourist location called La Rambla in Barcelona and on October 31, 2017, 8 people, including 6 tourists, a Belgian mother and five friends from Argentina were killed by an IS loyalist in New York.

This is part of the observable narrative that has unfolded since the events of 9/11, from the contested and often violent terrains of northern areas of Pakistan to post-industrial societies like the USA, the UK, and other European countries. According to the Global Terrorism Index from 2018–2022 the number of terrorist attacks fell 28 percent compared to previous reporting years. Afghanistan remained a central location and place for terrorist activities, whilst the Islamic State (IS) and its affiliates, followed by al-Shabaab, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) remained the deadliest terrorist organizations, in terms of casualties created. Moreover, ISIS is considered the deadliest terror group globally for the eighth consecutive year. Furthermore, in the Sahel region, South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) terrorist activities accounted for 43 percent (Wojciechowski 2023).

As a result, the last four decades have witnessed the loss of thousands of lives including civilians, security forces and bystanders, whilst seeing a commensurate growth in counterterrorism tradecraft, technologies, legislation and public policy measures. An anticipated reduction in such incidences (like *Operation Enduring Freedom* in Afghanistan and *Operation Iraqi Freedom*) is instead replaced by an upsurge, causing an existential confrontation to those who are engaged in the East (Schroden 2014). According to the US State Department's annual report of 2015, there were 11,774 terrorist attacks in 2015 resulting in 28,328 deaths. The report also asserts that the pattern of terrorist attacks is shifting; most of the attacks are now targeted at non-combatant civilians and the intentions of perpetrators have been shaped by a growing interest in mass casualties and 'post-card' events (George 2016). Consequently, in some cases, jihadism is the cause of regime change (such as ISIS's caliphate in Iraq and Syria (2014), the Taliban Regime in Afghanistan (1995) after Russian withdrawal, and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) regime in SWAT valley (2007) of Pakistan), social movements (such as the 2011 Arab Spring) as well as co-creators of proxy wars as can be seen in Saudi-Iran, Arab-Israel and India-Pakistan conflicts (Wright 2016; Ahmad 2017).

These branded jihadists have not only disrupted nation-states, their social cohesion, governance and economies, they have also continued to disrupt the individual citizens' personal, social, and economic lives, whilst defaming Islam and Muslims around the world and establishing Western norms that see Islamic believers as inherently threatening. The War on Terror (WoT) or The Long War or Global War on Terrorism (or GWoT) led by the USA and allied forces in Afghanistan and Iraq in October 2001 and March 2003 is also reflective of the *reality of jihadists*. However, quite contrary to the costly measures which are needed to contain the jihadi threat, it still holds a strong position in modern geopolitics.

## ■ THE APPLICATION OF AN ORGANIZATIONAL SCIENCE LENS ON JIHADISM

To understand jihadi terrorism based on its underpinning origins and drivers, there exists a variety of scholarly and policy perspectives, one of which asserts that this is a religiously inspired phenomenon (Hoffman 2003, 2006; Hellmich 2008; Hoffman 2009; Hodgson, Tadros 2013). This perspective analyses jihadists as Wahabis or Salafis who want to foster societal cohesion through the creation of a global caliphate and nation (Allen 2007, Abbas 2008; Abbas, Manzar 2010; Abrahms 2011). An alternative group of scholars argues that jihadism is a by-product of the radical ideologies of Marxist Islamic scholars like Syed Qutb, Maulana Modudi and Abdullah Azzam (Hansen, Kainz 1 2007; Payne 2011). According to this perspective, radical ideas of Qutb, Modudi and others are treated as the underpinning rationale for jihadi terrorism. A significant share in the literature on this topic, the third perspective, is the opinion that jihadism is inspired by locally driven social justice issues such as the resentment towards Western powers and the global North as a result of neo-colonialism in the Middle East, the fate of Palestine, as well as regional, sectarian, and political issues of Muslim communities (Argo 2006; Atran 2006; King, Taylor 2011; Spalek 2014). Nevertheless, the first perspective is challenged when comparing the ideological beliefs of the Taliban, Al Qaeda (AQ), and the Islamic State (IS). Rana et. al (2009), in their detailed analysis of AQ in the tribal areas of Pakistan, suggest that the Taliban and AQ alliance is underpinned by GWoT (Global War on Terrorism) and the conflict in Afghanistan. They also argue that it is misleading to believe the Taliban and AQ are religious allies united by shared ideological beliefs like those found in Salafi or Wahabi groups. However, to some extent, their ideological cohesion exists when they inspire violence against civilians and strategic use of sectarian killings as compared to IS, which lacks this level of discrimination. As far as their ideological motivations are concerned, the Taliban are followers of the Deoband sect of Sunni Muslims. Though this is popular and followed by many in the sub-continent, AQ is Wahabi in its ideology (Rana, Gunaratna 2008; Ranstorp 2009).

Similarly, Fishman (2016) examined IS and suggested that it is based on the logic of Takfir, which is inspired and self-proclaimed from the thirteen-century Muslim revivalist Ibn Taymmiyya. The second perspective is shattered by the rise and popularity of wartime scholars like Abu Bakar Al Nai (of AQ), Zarqawi (of AQI) and Al-Adni (of ISIS), who match up their experience of contemporary war with Islamic history and memory and – in doing so – justify their violence as a holy and divine obligation of their faith (Al-Rawi 2016; Fishman 2016; Melki, Jabado 2016). The third perspective gives weak explanations when jihadi terrorists strike politically stable Muslim nation-states such as Pakistan (stable, in phases), Jordan, and Indonesia. According to the Gallup survey (2016), 92% of Pakistanis rejected

jihadi terrorists and supported a tougher stance on them by the government of Pakistan, within the context of a Muslim population of approximately 93 percent. These limited observations help to contradict the conventional wisdom of jihadists as religious actors inspired by Islam, and the pervasive Western norm – inspired by the interpretation of Samuel Huntington's work on the 'clash of civilisations'.

Along with the three perspectives on the underpinnings, origins, and so-called religious justifications of jihadi terrorism, we see jihadism repositioned again as a threat, after examining the roots with the nature (religious, political, or cosmological) and process of jihadi terrorism (organised, informal or movement).

When it relates to the nature and manifestations of terrorism, the counter-terrorism problem is divided into two broad schools: typified by old and new terrorism (Mayntz 2004; Crenshaw 2008). The fundamental differences between these schools are found in the examination of the nature and manifestations of jihadi terrorism as formal and informal systems of organization. Explanations founded in a classical or an old terrorism school tend to examine jihadists as Muslim brothers of the IRA (in Ireland), ETA (in Spain) or the Red Brigades (of Germany) (Jensen 2008) who are rationally involved in violence to secure a political outcome. The scholarship in this camp argues that jihadists perpetrate terrorism through nationalistic struggles and that religious justifications and common action are used to organize their jihadi activities around a central authority *ameer* within a hierarchical and bureaucratic organizational framework (Bright, Whelan, Harris-Hogan 2018; van Leeuwen, Weggemans 2018). A broader consensus exists in which the seminal work of scholars (such as Hirschmann 2000; Arquilla, Ronfeldt 2001; Gunaratna 2005; Hoffmann 2008) have examined the nature and manifestations of jihadist terrorism as a phenomenon supported by formal organizations.

On the other hand, scholars of a new terrorism school understand jihadi terrorism as an aggregation of extremist and radicalised like-minded networks, diffused cellular structures, lone wolves / radicalised individuals acting alone, and international Islamic charities associated with different jihadi networks as logistical support (Stohl 2008; Archetti 2015). The new terrorism school argues that jihadi terrorism is inspired by radical jihadi ideology and its followers create self-sufficient and self-sustaining networks in the physical and digital realms, to commit terrorist acts (Jenkins 2015). The extension of this analysis – in the realm of practice – is that a military or law enforcement victory over such terrorists would not end the threat, as inspiration generated by their acts would serve to radicalise successive generations. These two schools have been highly influential in broadening academic and public policy interpretations of jihadism. Furthermore, they have provided consistent and well-researched scholarly contributions on jihadism, as such: global jihad, franchised jihad, AQ core and peripheries and global jihadi movement, and more recently

networked and digital jihadists. However, both schools fail to explicitly state the types of jihadi organizations and strategies used by jihadism to aspire to their global project of caliphate through violence, even in the presence of costly and sometimes public policy-dominating global efforts like GWoT (Mayntz 2004).

Therefore, it is of little doubt that in the last two decades, GWoT has grasped the attention of counter-terrorism efforts of policymakers and scholars, having a disproportionate impact upon how we understand asymmetric threats; however, jihadi terrorism still exists as an unresolved mystery in matters of international relations and security (Hegghammer 2011; Hellmich 2012; Hodgson, Tadros 2013; Hughes 2014; Laqueur 2017). The research also finds that flawed assumptions and an overall lack of understanding have led to misapplied policy prescriptions and the failure of proactive, aggressive, and sometimes overly violent Western countermeasures like GWoT, extrajudicial killings, drone attacks, and selective military deployments. The intellectual flaws in Western counter-jihadi approach are further evident from the hasty and only partially planned withdrawal from Afghanistan; the fall of Kabul to the Taliban and the almost total loss of traction of GWoT in the region is a stark defeat of Western counterterrorism efforts. The rise of IS in Iraq and Syria in 2014 and the evolution of the Syrian uprising to the jihadi civil war pose serious gaps in our conceptual understanding of the underlying drivers, nature, and manifestations of jihadi terrorism.

## ■ ORGANIZATIONAL SCIENCE FRAMING OF JIHADISM AND VIOLENCE

From the two schools of terrorism discussed above, this research posits that jihadi terrorism is an organized phenomenon that aims to create a system of governance that is logically and ideologically consistent, coming from a utopian worldview of the cleansed and blessed global Ummah. Both schools align on one point of organised jihadism but disagree on the underlying organizational mechanisms. A gap remains in the literature around the respective types of jihadi organizations, and then how they are organised and how they design and execute their activities. To fill this gap in the literature, we build upon the proposal of Mayntz (2004) concerning organizational forms of terrorism. In this view, jihadism is seen as an entity that demonstrates organizational behaviours and structural similarities with legal and non-violent economic and industrial organizations. Accordingly, organizational theories can be applied here to understand the logic of competition and growth (Teece 2007, 2012; Turner 2010; van Leeuwen, Weggemans 2018) as well as to comprehend jihadism. Moreover, they can do so whilst providing an organizational science analysis of jihadism and jihadi violence.

This research claims that jihadists can be bracketed as rational actors, who intentionally join jihadi terrorism by accepting and following jihadism as a frame

of reference that provides a layer of governance and activity, as well as a source of religious actualization. The vast body of literature in organizational theory on the rational choice theory and the deliberate creation of an organization to achieve a certain defined purpose or goal has helped our reading of the approach of jihadists as actors within organizational frameworks (Bittner 1965; Astley, Van de Ven 1983). This approach views terrorism as an organizational theory subject and consequently proposes a hybridised reading of the network and hierarchical understandings of this phenomenon. Our findings reinforce organizational thinking on jihadism and claim that hierarchies exist to manage it at the ideological, financial, and operational levels of jihadi groups. Nonetheless, jihadi strategy and the resilience of these groups and movements are inspired by self-sufficient organizing skills and methods that help to create and sustain the networked, sleeper cell and clandestine organizational designs of jihadists.

## ■ COMMUNICATIVE CONSCIOUS JIHADI ORGANIZATIONS

To understand jihadi strategy, organizational theory seeks to examine jihadism as a communication phenomenon, in which communication-conscious organizational structure and design are helpful to the endeavour of decoding jihadi organizations. Similarly, the literature on leaderless jihad, lone wolf terrorism and cellular structured jihadists are relevant in this organizational theory discourse of jihadism (Sageman 2004, 2011). We also argue that the vast body of organizational theory literature on autopoietic firms<sup>3</sup> (Luhmann 1986; Hernes, Bakken 2003) and communicative conscious organizations (CCO) are suitable for understanding the nature and activities of jihadism (Schoeneborn, Scherer 2010, 2012). Both perspectives view communication as the major driver of organizing; the CCO and autopoietic organizational scholars explicitly view acts of terrorism as a form of political or ideational communication. Through the communication of messages, the process of organising around the ideology takes place and a small clandestine group starts emerging around the central body which takes the role of owning the financial, ideological and policy objectives of the movement.

The autopoietic and communicative conscious understanding of jihadism views jihadi ideology as a source of autopoiesis and an organisational tool in which the acceptance of ideology by one actor translates to other actors as a self-sufficient system of jihadi violence. It provides confidence and a means by which to facilitate collective action responses. After an ideological inspiration, jihadists acting under the organized logic of terrorism then find routes through to organise, fund and perpetrate the jihadi act. A similar, yet more grounded, analysis of the

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<sup>3</sup> Autopoietic systems theory proposed by Luhmann (1927–1998) claims social systems like organizations are self-sustained, self-reproductive and self-regulated (Luhmann 1986).



managerial thinking and leadership role of jihadists is presented by Neumann (2011). Neumann identifies AQ's centre of gravity around middle managers (scholars or jihadi preachers) that create an ambient background of coalescing messages to motivate aspiring individuals to join the jihadi cause (Neumann, Evans, Pantucci 2011). It is not clear from this work, whether the messaging has to be precisely aligned or ideologically or religiously coherent. The vast body of literature on political marketing and communication (Maarek 2008) also enhances our argumentation on the communicative understanding of jihadists as attention seekers to attain and sustain political advantage.

## ■ **BRANDING STRATEGY OF JIHADI TERRORISM AND ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY**

This research suggests that the communicative analysis of organizational theory on jihadism can unlock jihadi resilience (organizational types) and fill the conceptual gaps in jihadi strategy (communication and marketing) within both old and new terrorism scholarship frames of reference. In this approach, jihadists deliberately attack civilians and inspire violence by communicating it to large audiences. The deaths and injuries caused are communications in and of themselves. Furthermore, with the advent of technology and connected global social media, jihadi terrorism has effectively used media channels and technology to give broader air to jihadi ideology and violence (Lia 2007; Lister 2014; McDonald 2014; McElreath et al. 2018). IS aggressively utilized social media campaigns – with professional production values – during the Syrian uprisings and the continued presence of a multitude of jihadists like Al-Qaeda (AQ) and Jabat al Nusra (JuN). Tehreek-e-Taliban, Pakistan (TTP) on the internet has conceived a new understanding of jihadist terrorism as a brand and propaganda-sensitive phenomenon. From this viewpoint, the seminal work of Beifuss et al. (2013) is relevant and shows some comparison to our central thesis around organized jihadism. Beifuss et al. (2013) used the iconography technique on logotypes of active jihadi groups across the globe and found an interplay of modern marketing and brand management tools in terrorist operations and strategy. This approach gained a brief favour within the British military and security services, who tried to use brand insights as a means by which to project the likely future behaviour and direction of jihadi groups.

We, therefore, argue that just like political, corporate, and social organizations, terrorists, including jihadists, face intense competition in the positioning of their ideological messages to their audiences: both the audience they seek to convince and the audience they seek to shock and repel. This web of political competition among terrorists and security forces constitutes a deliberate struggle for visual identity and organizational image for the audience to brand ideology that depicts grievance and future aspirations (Beifuss, Bellini, Carnus 2013; Abrahms, Conrad 2017).



The findings of this research also suggest that organized jihadi terrorism is deliberately using branding and marketing as active components of violent jihadi campaigns. The interplay of Western-educated jihadi sympathisers providing these kinds of business school insights is underexplored, but selective prosecutions suggest the link is strong. Arguably, the theoretical juxtaposition of CCO presents jihadism as an act of communication in which targeting civilians and other interests of the society and the targeted state or states is the underlying branding and marketing process of jihadi terrorism. Similarly, states – via their political positioning or the actions of their military and security services – are also nurturing and developing value and brand propositions.

### ■ **BRANDING JIHADI TERRORISM: AN ASSOCIATIVE MEMORY ANALYSIS**

To highlight the branding process, we used the corporate identity and associative network memory literature (Bromley 2000; Smith, French 2009; French, Smith 2013; Speed, Butler, Collins 2015) to tease out how ideology is associated with historical and current socio-political events. The ideological manipulation of social circumstances also helps jihadists to create messages and market the anticipated value of violence in their communication. In this way, jihadists can create a brand identity and positioning amongst a multitude of jihadi factions and an opposite brand and positioning amongst those communities who feel targeted by possible or anticipatory violence. An analysis in this format is indicative to determine why IS used tactics like filmed beheadings, or how messages highlighting indiscriminate brutality helped create the identity of IS within the jihadi competition of Iraq, Syria and elsewhere, helping to result in the displacement of AQ from Iraq, for example. In this marketing process, social media channels, accompanied by focused media coverage from jihadi war zones, provide organized jihadism with affordable and effective communication channels. As a result, the marketing approaches of jihadists help create a sphere of influence on an audience looking for radical identities (Melki, Jabado 2016).

### ■ **ORGANIZATIONAL SCIENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF GWOT**

Based on the discussion so far, the research has established that jihadism is an organised process of waging violence that uses branding and communication to organise jihadi activities. Now, the question turns to the GWoT and its ineffectiveness despite overwhelming intelligence applied and why security investments lack effectiveness despite resorting to aggressive measures such as drone attacks and boots on the ground in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. However, the highly active and often aggressive efforts of both Western and Eastern states to control jihadism have considerably failed to achieve these objectives (Verhoeven 2009; Oakley,

Proctor 2012; Duncker 2016). Hussein (2008) also highlights the failure of GWoT through his examination of the stubborn success of the Taliban's resistance. He concludes that GWoT failed because of the extent of a collateral damage in these operations, a lack of understanding of local cultural values and local societies (despite the efforts of the US military and their Human Terrain System initiative), and a flawed understanding of the Taliban movement. Fishman (2016) also raises these issues in his research on Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and notes the ineffectiveness of American and Iraqi efforts against the Zarqawi-led AQI. Fishman argues that AQI was readily able to forge alliances with the local populace which, in turn, helped Zarqawi to capitalise on some of the social and cultural capital in the tribal Iraqi society. These structural foundations helped dispersed jihadists to develop a coherent organization within Iraq (with external support) and to challenge American and Iraqi forces with a considerable level of jihadi violence.

Our research builds on Hussein's (2008) thesis that seeks to understand the impacts of counter-violence strategies on the overall dynamics of the society and the identification of a favourable community sentiment towards jihadists and their cause. As noted before, jihadists deliberately tend to brand their acts as „jihadi“, and thus in their branding endeavour, create an information war. As a result, predominantly hard-power military responses are less effective in reducing and neutralising conflicts and the dynamic organizational skills demonstrated by jihadi groups.

### ■ NON-KINETIC COUNTERTERRORISM: A BRAND MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGY

The organized jihadi approach, coupled with their effective use of branding and marketing strategies, means that kinetic responses (by largely Western governments) have merely resulted in new breeding grounds for jihadists to recruit to, and to carry out ever more violent acts. There needs to be greater efforts from public policy officials and academics to understand jihadists and more importantly, to develop countermeasures that can estimate the scope of the threat. Additionally, they must be neutralised at their strongest point of information warfare, whose underlying structure resides in the organisation and branding of jihadism.

We have assessed that organizational theory has considerable merit and is capable of making further contributions to counter-terrorism theory and practice. Using organisational theory results in counter-radicalisation strategies that are grounded in the logic of information warfare and which centre on competition, marketing, and branding. Though the GWoT has used a kinetic approach to countering transnational jihadism, it has also provided support to allies (like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, or Iraq) in their kinetic capacity building. It has – though – remained largely ignorant of the jihadist's information strategy which has been closely focused upon their own sense of marketing developing a brand proposition for a jihadi ideology and violence.

It is because of the significant persistence of the jihadi threat and the role of the ideology as part of the jihadist brand proposition in 21st-century terrorism, that Muslim nations – in particular – have begun to formulate strategies that highlight the real meanings and underlying theories of jihad. The governments have done this so that softer engagement strategies, such as countering the underlying narratives as a means to challenge the jihadi ideology, may form part of longer-term solutions. These softer (less military-oriented) approaches such as informing and educating young Muslims' (that are the potential audience) about jihad and other religious concepts are more productive in terms of addressing the flow of recruits and acceptability of the jihadi brand. This work has to be done – in part – by clerics who are correctly seen as sources of a legitimate authority.

To address the limitations found in counter-radicalisation strategies and practice, this research benefitted from insights from (Mintzberg, Lampel 1999) emergent strategy framework and grounded our own development of counter-radicalisation in the resource-based view (RBV) of strategic management (Penrose 1959). From the literature on strategic management and entrepreneurship, this research suggests there is value to be extracted from an organizational counter-terrorism response and one that foregrounds social entrepreneurship and social enterprises (SE) (Yunus 2007; Zahra et al. 2008; Zahra et al. 2009; Kostetska, Berezyak 2014) to counter jihadism.

## ■ ENGAGING JIHADIST: A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FRAMEWORK

Our research suggests that the concept of the Social Enterprise is a relevant tool to add to the toolbox of non-military counter-jihadist measures. It also helps to neutralise jihadist ideological branding and the marketing strategy around perpetrating and executing jihadi violence (Weimann 2005; Ryan 2013; Reid Meloy, Yakeley 2014). The concept of SE assists us in making the argument that social interventions within localised communities are underexplored but will prove to be key in reversing the failures of counterterrorism efforts to gain traction in hard-to-convince communities. In the context of the present study, SE makes sense as a broader counterterrorism strategy, particularly in the form of an engagement framework within communities affected by jihadist terrorism. The engagement strategies for the purpose of this research are defined as a broader framework of designing and implementing a community-based kinetic military response (inclusive of social, cultural and communal grounds) and a softer non-kinetic counter-narrative against jihadi ideology. We define vulnerable communities (in the sense of their vulnerability to the brand) as the ones directly controlled by jihadis such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen and other such diasporas across the globe in which social dislocation and disaffection with governance structures make them apt to respond to jihadi ideology.

In this way, SE will help in developing a counter-informative warfare strategy whilst working closely with less overt kinetic military responses. This approach helps to identify and collate the social and cultural dynamics to be able to critically intercede in the information contest and thus assist in neutralising the threat. It can then respond to dynamic information and propaganda tools of jihadism and counter-terrorism theory and can get useful insights from social enterprises as resource strategies in counter-terrorism efforts.

The findings of the research on jihadism and SE are indicative of the fact that any attempt that bypasses local and community support cannot impact upon the process of socialization and the localised acceptance of the jihadi brand. So, countering jihadists requires a forward and backward integration strategy; forward towards those who have joined the jihadi worldview and backwards towards those who can fall prey to branded jihadi terrorism.

There are some significant initiatives taken by various states to de-radicalize (Bibi Gul de-Radicalisation Centre in Pakistan) the masses and at least pause the flow of recruits. Recently, the interior minister of Pakistan, while condemning jihadists (forward integration), publicly announced that jihad and its declaration are the discretion of the state. In a similar vein, the Chief of Staff for the Pakistani Army, while addressing a gathering of university students (backward integration) in 2017, stated that Pakistan must revisit the religious school system and the role of religious scholars in the transfer of theological knowledge and the fabricated Islamic concept of jihad. He further asserted that we must take softer measures like faith training and deconstruction of the jihadi ideology (community responses), as well as political purposes to engage and safeguard our upcoming generations from the jihadi menace (Shahid 2017). Hussein (2008) examined GWT in Afghanistan and suggested that counter-terrorism may be forced to reconsider its heavily militarised orientation and instead consider including more social and cultural frames of reference to positively engage the community. The SE can organize the efforts of the community affected by terrorism into a viable counter-narrative which SE has already done in different social contexts, i.e., poverty, education, and social welfare. It can also render a hybrid frame of addressing jihadists in which the countering response can use kinetic and non-kinetic measures.

## ■ FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Jihadism as an emergent form of an organization and its marketing strategy – guided by the brand management construct – is an underdeveloped phenomenon. As such there is a productive research gap for scholars to understand a new organizational form of jihadist terrorism. In the context of branding jihadism, our research adopted the definition of a jihadi terrorism, explaining it as a threat and a set of deliberate actions of violence that create fear in a wider society. It also serves to repel and dismay those targeted upon. It is an ideological communication

process specifically created and targeted to deliver a threatening message of socio-political and religious goals. By discharging their *modus operandi* from the religious doctrine of jihad, they aim to change mental models and affect the behaviour of people and thus ultimately bring their adversaries to a bargaining position. Scholars investigating terrorism as a behaviour of individuals believe that jihadist terrorism is a snapshot of psychological warfare where the primary victims are not meant to be direct targets (Schmid 2005; Hoffman 2006; Hoffman 2009; Beifuss, Bellini, Carnus 2013); rather, they are the conduit through which the message is communicated, thus aiming to drive acceptance through violence.

Those targeted by the brand and value proposition are also a possible supply chain of future sympathizers and recruits. Jihadists, to achieve this goal, engage in visual communication and apply brand management techniques to reinforce their ideological pre-sets. Events and episodes – which are now captured digitally – are equally used in the service of the brand and to reinforce the ideology. This has provided for a situation – however – that means that the survival of jihadists is based on their ideological acceptance by the masses, and in particular, Muslim communities. The marketing and branding of the ideology placed within the jihadist's organizational approach has a logical basis and they can do this by using contemporary technologies of digital social media and electronic based legacy or broadcast media. Branding has an emotional attachment for people. This is because brand is as much as about values as it is about behaviours. Jihadists rationally build this emotional association by applying their ideology, making a difference among others and making themselves and their organization more functional (Beifuss, Bellini, Carnus 2013; Melki, Jabado 2016). Hence, a purposefully designed, ideologically emotional narrative of jihadists is translated into their branding strategy.

Our research provides an organized counter-response to challenge and neutralise organized jihadism; moreover, a promise of SE has the currency to help counter-terrorism in understanding jihadism as a combination of socio, political, religious, economic and anti-establishment ethos (Fishman 2016). This broader understanding is important to reflect on the underlying objectives of jihadism so that the war of information led by jihadists can be understood and responded to on the information, branding, and marketing premises. This will also be more impactful to counterterrorism officials as their response will similarly be grounded into and within the community.

The extant literature on jihadi communication and propaganda has discussed jihadists as attention seekers, but this literature has underplayed and sometimes misunderstood the underlying branding and marketing processes around jihadism (Brachman 2006). A case in point is ISIS' branding at the peak of the Syrian uprising in 2013 and 2014. The use of YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Telegram and a multitude of other social media hubs, and to do so with professional production values, to communicate their message to the audience were effective (Blaker 2015). Several studies have discussed and analysed jihadi material propagated on the internet;

these studies have also estimated and recorded the usage of sophisticated editing and filming tools, the art of imagery by jihadists and prediction on recruitment through these jihadi efforts (McDonald 2014; Klausen 2015; Melki, Jabado 2016). However, a limitation persists in examining the associative techniques of jihadists in creating a relationship of Islamic memory like frequent usage of concepts like Caliphate, Jihad and holy duty, Martyrdom, Migration, Dar Ul Islam, Dar Ul Harb, end of times, paradise, and alignment with present-day conditions (social, political, and economics of Muslim communities at large).

The logical question for counter-terrorism theory and practice to all these efforts should be what connects these messages to an audience. It is not the internet, as a platform, that creates meanings, it is rather the message, its purpose, and its relationship to Islamic history that are grasping the attention of the audience. From this standpoint, our research reinforces an associative network memory as a tool to relate the message to an audience. We are of the view that an associative network memory establishes a revival of memory, and the message then starts making sense to the audience. Within the associative network frame of jihadism deconstruction of messages like Dar Ul Islam, a seventh-century concept of the Islamic theology that laid the foundation of an early Islamic society can be effectively decoded to neutralise the branding effort of jihadism.

The autopoietic framework of understanding jihadi organizations is valuable for the counter-terrorism theory and practice to neutralise the self-sufficient jihadi networks. As we noted earlier, the jihadi ideology multiplies in the minds of like-minded and predisposed individuals. Those who are inspired by the brand proposition and its values create, at a minimum, a word of mouth form of marketing for the jihadi cause and themselves go onto actively support, facilitate or perpetrate jihadi terrorism. In this value chain, the identification of a focal person and its neutralisation will lead to the autopoietic disintegration of jihadi cellular networks.

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Mudassir Farooqi, Robert M. Dover

## BRANDING OF JIHADI TERROR. AN ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY UNDERSTANDING OF JIHADI TERRORISM

Since 2001, jihadism as a socio-political movement of waging jihadi violence has been prominent in international relations and security. The dominant discourse has been that jihadism is a religious phenomenon, in which violence is drawn from 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Wahabist and Salafist movements. This research argues that jihadism has been influenced by imperialism and for over two centuries has shaped itself as an organized phenomenon. Jihadism continues to evolve as an organized and branded phenomenon incorporating religious, political, economic and social goals to facilitate violence. The absence of engagement strategies with local communities to reduce radicalisation has – in part – caused a failure to address jihadist violence. This research suggests that social entrepreneurship is an underexplored engagement route, which encourages locals to own social issues like radicalization. This research utilises management science insights, particularly brand management, communication-based organizations, and social entrepreneurship, applying them to the evolving challenges presented by so-called jihadist groups.

**Słowa kluczowe:** džihadyzm; terroryzm džihadystyczny; teoria organizacji; zarządzanie marką; przedsiębiorczość społeczna

**Keywords:** Jihadism; Jihadi Terrorism; Organizational Theory; Brand Management; Social Entrepreneurship