

Is Islam Still a Threat to the West?

The 21st Century Perspective



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Abstract

The threat being posed by Islam to the West remains a disturbing aspect in the 21st century. Islamic ideology and militant groups continue to perpetrate terrorist activities that threaten the economic, social, political, and military foundations of the West. This study was based on an analytical review of Islam as a threat to the West. Literature reviewed included reports, peer-reviewed journals, books, and websites that provide details of the interaction between Islam and the West. The findings revealed that although Islam-related terrorist groups have been weakened over time, they remain volatile to the West because Muslims worldwide in the mosques, Islamic schools and public schools' curriculums that teach fighting the West. It was recommended that the West's governments should increase vigilance to the Islam-related terrorism groups. Additionally, it is recommended that Islam as a religion should introspect itself to identify the elements of religious foundations related to terrorism and address them if they must stop being a threat to the West.

Keywords: *Islam, threat, militant groups, terrorism, West.*

1. Background

The question of whether Islam is a threat to the West or not has lingered in scholarly contexts for decades. Across the globe, the word 'Islam' is mostly linked to 'extremism' due to verbal support for and dissemination of ideologies/curriculum that propagate terrorism in their jihad war (French, 2020). The passages in the Quran and Islamic jurisprudence are used to justify the violence being experienced in several parts of the world in current times. Justifications given for attacks on civilians by Islamic extremist groups come from their interpretations of the Quran, hadith and Sharia law (Holbrook, 2010; French, 2020). The origins of the conflict are traced back to the

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seventh century with the advent of Islam before it spread through the Middle East, North Africa, and West Asia. The conflict underwent a series of expansions, including the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, followed by the Mamluk wars. The Ottoman Empire's expansion further extended into Europe, reaching Austria. Conflicting incidences also included the seventh century Iberia invasions of and the eleventh century crusades (Sezgin, 2000).

Islam is historically considered a major strategic threat to the Western society. Several deadly attacks on Western countries that followed the 9/11 included bombings and violent attacks in Madrid, Manchester, New York, London, Stockholm, Berlin, San Bernadino, Nice, and Paris (Gaibullov & Sandler, 2019). The dramatic attacks of 9/11 intensified the millennium-long hostility between Muslim and Western worlds (Sánchez-Escalonilla, 2010). In response, the US executed carefully planned strikes to eliminate terrorist groups. However, Islamic teaching and doctrines that teach fake luxury lives for believers who die is a factor that perpetuates continued radicalization and terrorist attacks.

The relationship between Islam and the West features rivalries and is marred with conflicts (Lapidus, 2014). Recent refugee crises and terrorism threats that radical Islamic groups perpetrate have further confirmed that Islam and Muslims who hate the western culture and want to change it to Sharia laws are posing a significant the West's culture, welfare, and economy due to their teachings and actions (Bloch, 2016; Mackey, 2015). Due to their hatred for the Western culture, the Muslims are making significant attempts to convert other people to Islam through false promises and sometimes threats to safety.

The September 11 attacks spurred confirmed ever-increasing intensity of Islam's threat to the West (Abdelgadir & Fouka, 2020). The U.S States Department of State (2019) report listed Muslim-majority countries, including Egypt and Iran, as associated with significant human rights issues perpetrated by terrorist activities. Recent terrorist attacks that Jihadists claimed responsibility threatened the world peace because the Islamic society was increasingly associated with incidences that cause massive loss of lives. The period between 2012 and 2015 saw several terrorist attacks that Muslim jihadists claimed responsibility. Similar incidences have been reported in Nigeria, Syria, and Somalia.

Smith (2015) insisted that the history of Muslim-Christian dialogue has featured periods of significant hostility and open war. The Iranian revolution of 1979 sparked the issue of Islam and its actual threat to the West, making it a matter of enduring international preoccupation, generating increased concern of the Western countries about the potential of Iran's effort to export its revolution to other parts of the world (Sezgin, 2000; Blumenthal, 2020). The Muslim adherents of Islam feel that the Western social values and practices are antithetical to the Muslim tradition (Panjwani, 2019). The believe makes the Muslims to introduce teachings that create negative views of Muslims toward the West. It is worth to note that in the midst of uncertain encounters arising from conflicting worldviews, intensifying the levels of Islam's threat on caused by negative worldviews and values insulted among Muslims through Islamic teachings and doctrines. However, scholarly research on the current state of Islam's threat to the West is still inadequate.

2. Research Aim

This study intended to bridge the gap in research by analyzing the threat of Islam to the World during the current era. To achieve the study aim, the study analyzed a brief history of the relationship between Islam and the West, discussed the perils of selected Islam-related groups that threaten the West, and investigated the changing times in the context of globalization and internationalization in blending the cultural orientations of Islam and the West. The research question for this study was *is Islam still a threat to the West during the 21st century?*

3. Method

A qualitative research method grounded on the secondary research approach permitted the researcher to access published sources from online and offline sources. A keyword search was conducted in online databases to generate a list of sources that met the inclusion/exclusion criteria of up-to-date, relevance, and author credibility. Sources accessed included books, peer-reviewed journals, magazines, and websites. The selected sources were subjected to extensive and reiterative reading to make meaning of the data. Data relevant to the research question was highlighted and transferred to Microsoft Word file to allow for organization and presentation. Content analysis was used to analyze the data.

4. The ‘Sayyid Qutb’ Effect

Sayyid Qutb (1906-1996) created a foundation for religious anarchy that continues to expose the world to Islamic terrorist attacks to date. Qutab played a key role in inspiring violence and influencing Al-Qaeda and ISIS, and the Wahhabi Cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood (Calvert, 2010; Commins, 2006; Moussalli, 2020). After the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1922, Muslim communities were deeply discontented with the loss of the Caliphate. As an initial response to the disintegration, Hasan al-Banna established the Muslim Brotherhood in an attempt to restore the Caliphate. Reestablishment of the Caliphate implied first fighting the West. As a prominent member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutab (Egyptian author and educator) developed writings and ideas that have profoundly impacted on radical Islamic thought, including inspiring the stabilization of Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Qutb's legacy is contentious. While some see him as a martyr for his execution by the Egyptian government, others view his ideas as the root of modern extremist violence (Toth, 2013). His influence, bolstered by Wahhabi support, extends beyond Al-Qaeda and ISIS, affecting various radical Islamist movements worldwide.

Qutb's ideological foundations have continued to influence the threat posed by Islam-related terrorism. *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (milestones) was one of his most influential ideological foundations published in 1964 (Calvert, 2010). The ideology calls for the establishment of a society governed strictly by Islamic law (Sharia). The argument that the Muslim world had fallen into a state of ignorance (Jāhiliyyah) similar to pre-Islamic times, due to the adoption of secular and Western values implied anarchy toward non-Muslim communities. Qutb's concept of Jāhiliyyah extended to modern Muslim societies, which he believed were corrupted by Western influences and thus not truly Islamic (Mitchell, 1993). Jāhiliyyah denote the "age of ignorance" in Islamic tradition, describing the period before the revelation of Islam to the Prophet Muhammad. In Arabic the word means "ignorance," or "barbarism," and indicates a negative Muslim evaluation of pre-Islamic life

and culture in Arabia as compared to the teachings and practices of Islam (Webb, 2014). This notion provided a religious justification for overthrowing governments that did not strictly adhere to Islamic principles.

Moreover, Hakimiyya (the sovereignty of God) was deeply grounded in Qutb's insistence that only God's laws and Sharia laws are legitimate (Mitchell, 1993; Kepel, 2002). The rejection of human-made laws and secular governance, which he saw as a rebellion against God's sovereignty created a fertile ground for violence across the world. Scholarly works shows that Qutb reinterpreted Jihad as a necessary struggle against both external (non-Muslim) and internal (secular Muslim) enemies (Calvert, 2010). Qutb's view of Jihad as a means to implement Sharia and establish an Islamic state promoted the idea of 'war' between Islamic and non-Islamic communities.

Sayyid Qutb's influence extended beyond Sunni Islam and the Arab world, reaching Shi'a leaders such as Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the architect of the Iranian Revolution (Berman, 2003; Keddie, 2006). Although Khomeini was a Persian Shi'a cleric and Qutb a Sunni Arab thinker, they shared key ideological tenets, particularly the emphasis on the establishment of an Islamic state governed by Sharia law. Khomeini was influenced by Qutb's writings, particularly the notions of Jahiliyya and Hakimiyya, which resonated with his views on the illegitimacy of secular governments (Mitchell, 1993; Calvert, 2010). According to Keddie (2006), Khomeini adopted the idea that a true Islamic government must be based on the principles of divine sovereignty, rejecting both the Western model of secularism and the existing monarchical regime in Iran.

Similar to Qutb, Khomeini saw the need for a revolutionary struggle (Jihad) to overthrow the Shah's regime, which he viewed as corrupt and anti-Islamic. The concept of Jihad as a means of establishing an Islamic state was a significant element in Khomeini's revolutionary rhetoric. After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Khomeini established the Islamic Republic of Iran, governed by a theocratic system that combines elements of both Shi'a jurisprudence and principles echoed in Qutb's ideology (Kepel, 2002; Berman, 2003). The Iranian constitution enshrined the idea of Velayat-e Faqih (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist), which parallels Qutb's vision of divine sovereignty and the implementation of Sharia in addition to exporting of the Islamic revolution.

5. Islam-related Groups Signaling a Threat to the Western Society

Sezgin (2000) noted that militant organizations represent a small group in the Islamic movement. Notable Islam-related militant groups have continued to pose unimaginable security challenges to the West in the recent history. Islamic Militant groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) have caused significant threats not only in socioeconomic and political spectrums, but also in terms of physical security. Despite most of militant groups' capacity having been limited, there is adequate evidence that the groups' still volatile and can become reactive anytime. Thus, Islam-related groups are still posing a political, economic, and military threat on the West.

5.1 The Muslim Brotherhood

Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928 as a transnational Sunni Islamist organization by the Islamic scholar and teacher, Hassan al-Banna (Mitchell, 1993). The Brotherhood's combination of military, religious, political activism created a model for Islamic political movements, promoting

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the idea that Islam is not just a faith but a comprehensive system for all aspects of life. The Muslim Brotherhood has had a complex and multifaceted impact on the perception and manifestation of Islamist ideology in the West (Volpi, 2011). This influence extends to the ways in which violence and terrorism are understood and addressed within Western societies.

The Muslim Brotherhood's founder, Hassan al-Banna, created a solid foundation for promoting activism, religious education, and social work as means to achieve this goal, emphasizing gradual societal change over immediate violent revolution (Pargeter, 2013). The Muslim Brotherhood established branches and affiliated organizations in the West to promote its ideology and support Muslim communities (Mitchell, 1993). Despite its non-violent public stance in the West, the Brotherhood's ideological roots and connections to more radical elements have raised concerns among Western governments and analysts.

Critics argue that the Brotherhood's presence in the West serves as a conduit for radicalization, indirectly supporting violent extremism by promoting a narrative of Islamic victimhood and opposition to Western values. The narrative of a global struggle against Islam's enemies can inspire susceptible individuals to seek out more radical, violent paths. The Brotherhood's emphasis on religious identity and perceived oppression may contribute to an environment where extremist ideas can take root (Pargeter, 2013). Western governments have banned or restricted some Brotherhood-affiliated organizations, citing their potential to foster extremism due to their teachings and doctrines. However, there is need to ban all the organizations to further improve the safety of the West.

Hasan Albana established the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928 as a transnational Sunni Islamist organization in a bid to enforce Islam as a solution to the problems facing humanity (Borgeson & Valeri, 2009). The marriage between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Saudi State's Salafi-Wahhabi tradition created the Saudi al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya (Sahwa or an Islamic Awakening) to intensify the rejection of the Western way of life and separate Islam from the rule of law.

Since its inception, Muslim Brotherhood supported accepted the utility of political violence; its members conducted and/or attempted assassinations on Egyptian state figures, including the Prime Minister, Mahmud El Nokrashi (Jenkins & Farr, 2015). Muslim Brotherhood's promotion of *takfirism* implies that it supports the stigmatization of other Muslims as in infidel and using extreme violence as a way to pursue a perfect Islamic society (Moussalli, 2012). The doctrine continues to inspire many Jihadist movements, including Hamas, which is the Palestinian offshoot of the group that currently uses violence to retain its control of the Gaza Strip (Slocum, 2019). Evidently. The Muslim Brotherhood-inspired movement has maintained its influence with volatility that qualifies it to be a threat to the Western society (Ibrahim, 2019).

The cooperation between Wahhabi (the most popular Salafi group) and the Muslim Brotherhood exacerbated the threat of Islam. History shows that the Wahhabi originated in the Arabian Peninsula in the 18th century, advocates for a puritanical form of Islam. Although initially focused on purifying Islam from what it considered deviations, the movement found common ground with the Muslim Brotherhood in the 20th century (Volpi, 2011). The common goal between the Wahhabi movement and the Muslim Brotherhood was to establish societies governed by strict interpretations of Sharia law. This shared objective led to a strategic alliance, despite differences in their specific theological and jurisprudential approaches. The Wahhabi movement provided

financial and ideological support to the Muslim Brotherhood, helping to disseminate Qutb's ideas (Kepel, 2002). Saudi Arabia, a key proponent of Wahhabism, became a significant supporter of Islamist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, in their efforts to counter secular and socialist influences in the Muslim world. This cooperation facilitated the spread of radical ideologies that laid the groundwork for groups such as Al Qaeda and Al Hijra that preceded Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Both movements contributed to the radicalization of individuals and the creation of networks that supported extremist activities globally.

The 1970s oil price jump, particularly during the 1973 oil embargo, significantly increased Saudi Arabia's wealth. With a newfound influx of petro-dollars, Saudi Arabia used a portion of its resources to promote its version of Wahhabism, a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam (Shay, 2018). This promotion included funding religious schools (madrassas), mosques, and organizations globally, some of which were linked to extremist ideologies. Over time, certain groups that emerged from this religious network contributed to terrorism. However, not direct supporters of terrorism, the Saudi government's wealth from oil inadvertently funded activities and ideologies that fueled extremist groups (Blanchard, 2007). The article by Robert Williams highlights how a Wahhabi state has funneled billions of dollars into U.S. universities, particularly Ivy League institutions, through the Qatar Foundation to conceal state funding as private donations. This money is linked to rising antisemitism, speech intolerance, and the erosion of democratic values on campuses. The Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP) reports that at least 100 American colleges failed to disclose foreign donations, including over \$4.7 billion from Qatar between 2001 and 2021 (Williams, 2023). Qatar's financial influence extends beyond academia, supporting media networks and political lobbying efforts to further its geopolitical interests.

The Muslim Brotherhood's ideas, particularly those of Qutb, influenced many Shi'a thinkers in Iran. The Brotherhood's literature was widely read and discussed among Iranian clerics and activists (Keddie, 2006). The Brotherhood's approach to combining religious discourse with political activism provided a template for Iranian revolutionaries. This included grassroots mobilization, political participation, and the use of propaganda to galvanize public support. The success of the Iranian Revolution, inspired in part by Qutb and the Muslim Brotherhood, demonstrated the viability of an Islamic state, reinforcing similar movements across the Muslim world (Calvert, 2006). Evidently, the Muslim Brotherhood in collaboration with Sayyid Qutb played a crucial role in shaping the ideological underpinnings of the Iranian Revolution (Kepel, 2002; Berman, 2003). Their emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the rejection of secular governance, and the need for a revolutionary struggle resonated with Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers. This cross-pollination of ideas between Sunni and Shi'a thinkers underscores the profound and far-reaching impact of Qutb's radical Islamic thought (Calvert, 2006).

5.2 Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda is an Islamist terrorist group responsible for executing high-profile terrorism attacks across the world. As a pan-Islamist militant organization led by Sunni Jihadists, Al-Qaeda's intention is to unite the Muslim world under a supra-national Islamic revolution caliphate (Hazim & Bunker, 2014). The group was founded in 1988 in Pakistan under the leadership of Osama bin Laden who got his inspiration from Sayyid Qutab. Qutb's writings inspired key figures in Al-Qaeda, including Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri (Kepel, 2002). Al-Qaeda adopted

Qutb's view of a corrupt Muslim world needing purification through violent Jihad. The group's goal to establish a global caliphate and its tactics of targeting both Western and Muslim secular governments reflect Qutb's ideologies. It is worth noting that the Al-Qaeda accepted responsibility of the 9/11 attack, in which Taliban Pakistan and Afghan had helped Osama bin Laden and to execute the attack.

On August 7, 1998, nearly simultaneous bombs blew up in front of the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (Hoffman, 2014). The attacks targeted American embassies in the East Africa capital cities of Nairobi, Kenya, and Tanzania, claiming about 220 lives and injuring scores in addition to massive destruction of property (Fighel, 204). The Islamic terrorist group, AL-Qaeda, claimed responsibility of the attack with the aim of not just simply wrecking a terrible destruction but also creating a global media spectacle that would increase advertisement for the organization and its militant ideological goals (Haynes, 2018). Bowman (2014) narrated that the attack occurred decades ago under Osama bin Laden as the leader of Al-Qaeda who was executed on May 2, 2011 at the age of 54 years. Another deadliest attack was the September 11, 2001 that killed about 2,750 people in New York, 184 at the Pentagon. Additionally, Hoffman (2017) recounted that, in October 2000, Al-Qaeda militants attacked the USS *Cole* in Yemen, using a small boat filled with explosives to bomb the U.S. Navy destroyer. The attack killed 17 American sailors and injured dozens. This marked a significant escalation in Al-Qaeda's campaign against U.S. interests (Hoffman, 2017).

More than two decades since the Al-Qaeda perpetrated the massive attacks, existing evidence shows that the group and its affiliates have retained some impressive strengths with limited opportunities to regroup, making the group far less dangerous than it was date the time of 9/11 (Bayman, 2017). However, this does not completely eliminate the fact that Al-Qaeda is still a threat to the West because its activities are still active despite facing difficulties capitalizing on the decline of the Islamic State and resuming its role as the dominant jihadist organization. According to Bergen et al. (2011), Al-Qaeda's threat to the West may be less severe compared to two decades ago but it is more complex and more diverse as evidenced by the allies' sustained capacity to kill several Americans in a single attack (Bergen, 2011). Part of Al-Qaeda's weaknesses are emanating from increased localization of the broader jihadist movement, although the declining strength of the Al-Qaeda is suggesting to the Western countries that they are safer, Byman (2019) argued that they are not completely safe from Al-Qaeda-linked terrorism.

Byman (2019) investigated the extent to which Al-Qaeda and its affiliates are posing a threat to the United States and other Western countries and noted that some analysts have expressed fear that AL-Qaeda is again on the march (Shelley, 2018). It is evident that Al-Qaeda has perpetrated deadliest attacks in history and survived a ferocious United States' counterterrorism response. Despite the United States response having been one of the biggest counterterrorism successes that forced the Islamic State's caliphate underground and subjugated its last territory in Syria in 2019, Al-Qaeda managed to fill the void and made a comeback (Byman, 2019). Analysts have consistently revealed that the affiliates of Al-Qaeda continue to pose a potential risk of swelling the ranks of members that demonstrate loyalty to Al-Qaeda leader, a step that have continued to increase the group's reach. The retreat of the United States from the Middle East could eventually give Al-Qaeda and affiliates more opportunities to expand within Afghanistan and beyond

(Byman, 2022); countries likely to be affected include Somalia, Syria, Yemen and countries that the US forces and US-backed governments are opposed to the Al-Qaeda activities (Byman, 2019).

A United States worldwide assessment in 2019 concluded that Al-Qaeda is a reinforcing command structure and continuing to urge attacks against Western targets (Coats, 2019). The United Nations reported in 2019 that Al-Qaeda as a terrorist group featuring widespread resilience and allegedly stronger than IS in Yemen, Syria Somalia, and parts of West of Africa (United States Security Council, 2019). An earlier report by Bergen (2011) revealed that the Al-Qaeda group has included the U.S. citizens and residents in prominent roles, leading to increased accuracy of planning and operations. The group is becoming more threatening as the higher number numbers of Americans are attaching themselves to it, creating a U.S.-based jihadist militants.

5.3 ISIS

ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) is a Sunni jihadist group formed in 2004. ISIS, a Salafi-jihadist group, has carried out and inspired numerous terrorist attacks globally, causing thousands of deaths and injuries. In 2004, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Iraqi extremist network merged with al-Qaida, forming al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI), ISIS's predecessor, which Zarqawi led until his 2006 death. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took leadership in 2010, expanding into eastern Syria by 2011 (Al Awwad, 2024). In 2013, AQI was renamed ISIS, and in 2014, the group broke away from al-Qaida, declaring itself a caliphate and seizing significant territory in Iraq and Syria. The group has a particularly violent ideology that calls itself a caliphate and claims religious authority over all Muslims. Although ISIS was initially inspired by AL-Qaeda, it later publicly expelled from it ISIS's declaration of a caliphate and its strict implementation of Sharia law are in line with Qutb's vision (Kepel, 2002). The group's extreme violence and persecution of those they consider infidels or apostates are justified through Qutb's teachings on Jihad and Jahiliyya (Mitchell, 1993). ISIS's propaganda often cites Qutb's works to legitimize its actions and ideology.

Gorka and Gorka (2015) recounted that the November 13th attack in Paris claimed 130 lives and injured 368, raising the question of what would happen if a similar attack occurred in the United States. By 2015, ISIS had already recruited supporters within the United States with the intent of executing domestic attacks in America. Key statistics reveal that ISIS has been recruiting members from the United States, with about 1,000 ongoing probes by FBI. The high rate at which ISIS recruit members and the resources at its disposal makes it the deadliest fully-fledged insurgency. In 2022, ISIS continued to expand to its global network, brand, and operations with direct threats to the US homeland from in 2023 that originated from individuals inspired by jihad groups (Anglin, 2023).

ISIS engages in a variety of violent tactics, including targeted killings, the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), ambushes, large-scale military assaults, kidnappings, and suicide bombings within Iraq and Syria. The group promotes similar actions globally by urging supporters to use accessible weapons to carry out attacks in their own countries (Gilsinan, 2015). Additionally, ISIS has sent operatives overseas to orchestrate attacks. While the group often targets military and defense forces within Iraq and Syria, it also strikes government officials, critical infrastructure, and foreign aid workers, as well as civilians it views as opposing its version of Islamic law (Jones et al., 2014). In December 2004, the US State Department designated AQI (ISIS's predecessor) as

a foreign terrorist organization. This designation remains in effect for ISIS to date. Moreover, several ISIS leaders have also been named Specially Designated Global Terrorists, including former leaders Hajji ‘Abdallah in 2020, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 2011, and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2003.

5.4 Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab translates to ‘the youth’ and it swears allegiance to the Al-Qaeda due to having worked with Osama bin Laden for many years. Al-Shabaab’s past focus was attacking young Somali government in a bid to establish an extreme form of Sharia in the country. Thus, the group continued their attacks on African peacekeepers working to restore peace in Somalia. However, Al-Shabaab’s focus seems to be evolving, as evidence by the September 21st on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, that claimed 70 lives and 200 injured (Eichhorn, 2022). The attack demonstrated the group’s ability and desire to threaten civilians globally. Al-Shabaab’s success in recruiting Western fighters that conducted suicide bombing operations in Somalia and Britain signals a major threat to the West. Al-Shabaab militant group tends to target tourism destinations and hotels, as well as shopping malls where they believe foreign nationals are found. How Al-Shabaab got access to the United States and even encouraged sympathizers to carry out smaller but deadly attacks continues to worry the government of the day. These incidences signal that Al-Shabaab, a Muslim-associated organization is a threat to the West’s security.

5.5 Boko Haram

Iwuoha (2019) argued that Nigeria is one of four United States’ most important partners in Africa. From the standpoint of economics, Nigeria runs a trade surplus with the United States because it imports more than \$5.5 billion in US goods annually (Ademola-Adelehin & Smith, 2017). As Duncan (2018) stated, Nigeria’s long-term stability and success is critically important to the United States. However, Boko Haram’s attacks on locals are exhibiting increased lethality and sophistication, raising the country’s profile in the United States national security analysis. With an estimated 4,000-6,000 members, the Islamist militant is believed to have hardcore terrorists who conduct deadly suicide bombings, launch improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and car bombs, conduct massacres, kidnappings, and destroy property (Felter, 2018; Iwuoha, 2019). Given the direct business link with the United States, Boko Haram’s terrorist activities is a threat to the business relations with Nigeria. For example, Iwuoha (2019) claimed that the relations and diplomatic engagement between Nigeria and the United States are sometimes tampered due to distrust and suspicion, threatening the interaction between the two countries.

5.6 The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) was the custodian of the revolution and provide support for militant groups in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Yemen; it has ties to armed groups in the region, including Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territories (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024). The IRGC is a branch of Iran’s armed forces, established after the 1979 Islamic Revolution to safeguard the country’s new government and Islamic system. The IRGC has since expanded its role to include military, political, and economic influence in Iran and the broader Middle East. Iran’s active support for Hamas and the increased extension of

Hezbollah is threatening the Western military because the groups are linked to recent series of terrorist attacks. Hamas has been responsible for terrorist attacks in Israel, such as the Hamas 10/7 attack on Israel, while Hezbollah has actively attacked Argentina and Bulgaria (Farida, 2019). Hezbollah was also responsible for the bombing the U.S. Embassy and Multinational Force barracks in Beirut in October 23, 1983. The group also hijacked TWA flight 847 to Beirut in June 1985 and immediately demanded to know the identities of those with Jewish-sounding names (The Henry Jackson Society, 2012). The IRGC consists of multiple divisions, including the Quds Force, which is responsible for overseas operations and is closely associated with supporting non-state militant groups.

According to the Congressional Research Service (2024) report, Hezbollah has maintained the capability to target U.S persons and interests in the region, globally, and to some extent in the United States. The continued provision of material support to Hezbollah up to 2020 by the U.S.-based sympathizers indicate that the group is still strong and capable of launching deadly attacks. Hizballah, also known as the "Party of God," is a Shia militant group formed in 1982 in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. It has been involved in numerous anti-U.S. terrorist acts, including the 1983 bombings of the U.S. Embassy and Marine barracks in Beirut. Hizballah, which participates in Lebanese politics, has retained its arms despite international calls for disarmament, justifying its actions as a defense against Israeli aggression. The group has also been implicated in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in 2005 (Farida, 2019). A UN-backed court found a member of the group guilty of involvement in the assassination due to the involvement of its member, Salim Ayyash, in the central role in Beirut's 2005 bomb attack that killed Hariri.

Hizballah expanded its military operations, targeting Israeli interests globally, while supporting the Assad regime in Syria. In 2013, the European Union designated Hizballah's military wing as a terrorist organization due to its terrorist activities and involvement in Syria. Despite the International Criminal Court having not indicted H.A, the European Union (EU) added the group's "military wing" to its terror list, leaving its supposedly separate "political arm" unsanctioned. This decision followed Hezbollah's 2012 bus bombing in Burgas, Bulgaria. The reason for EU's denial to place Hezbollah on its list of terrorist organizations is based on the view that it would bear severe ramifications on stability in the Middle East and global security because it partakes in the political process and has an active arm in the political system in Lebanon. It has further determined that there is no tangible evidence of Hezbollah's recent engagement in terrorist activities to warrant such action. Nevertheless, Schwammenthal (2023) emphasized that lawmakers across the transatlantic region, including Europe, the U.S., and Israel, are pushing for this change, citing Hezbollah's involvement in terrorism, violent regional conflicts, and its destabilizing influence in Lebanon. The call for action is also rooted in concerns over Hezbollah's use of European territories for fundraising and recruitment, which could threaten European security and undermine efforts against global terrorism.

During the first four months of the Gaza war between Israel and Hamas (from October 2023 to February 2024), U.S. forces stationed throughout the Middle East were targeted over 160 times, mostly by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq (Smith, 2024). The Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, marked a significant escalation in the ongoing conflict between Hamas and Israel (Johannsen, 2024). These attacks involved drone, rocket, and missile strikes on the United States

positions in Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and the Red Sea. A significant event occurred when a drone strike at a U.S. base in Jordan, near the borders of Syria and Iraq, killed three Americans, injuring scores. In response, U.S. forces launched airstrikes against facilities, arsenals, command centers, and training grounds used by pro-Iranian militias, which collectively operate under the “Axis of Resistance” in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. The Hamas attack on Israel posed several potential threats to the West, both directly and indirectly, including involvement in regional stability, threatening the United States allies, potential attacks on the West citizens, homeland security, and economic and energy disruptions.

6. The Impact of Information Communication Technology

Technological innovations and globalization are rapidly changing the arena of conflict between Islam and the West. Currently, there is a growing consensus that the tensions between Islam and the West may be growing with the expansion of information society. Zeiger and Gyte (2020) noted that extremist Islamic groups use online and social media platforms to spread propaganda, radicalize individuals, and recruit new members. Youths are mostly accessible online due to increased access to internet-based technological tools. As technology continues to expand, it is becoming easier for Islamic extremist groups to access and recruit vulnerable groups using online platforms (Baugut & Neumann, 2020). This means that the number of terrorists associated with Islam will increase, further intensifying the threat to the West’s security. Recently, it has become evident that some the perpetrators of some attacks are individuals born and raised in Western countries who undergo radicalization (Miladi & Mellor, 2021). Radicalizing and engaging the natives presents a unique challenge due to increased difficulty of identifying and preventing the security threats.

History writers have expressed how Muslims’ fearful decisions for global expansion affect the ways in which Islam and the West relate. Historical literature portrays a caution to Western societies that “Islam regards itself as having a universal vocation and proclaims itself to be the only true religion to which everyone must adhere” (Ellul, 1985, p. 28). While some Muslim leaders have historically promoted the goal of internationalization and globalization, the impetus of such efforts are meant to encourage Muslims to selfishly benefit from global progress in science, economic, and wealth, hence, increasing their position to rule the world by Shari’a laws.

7. Conclusion

The threat of Islamic ideology to the West is still active and can hit anytime, considering the militant attacks motivated by the Muslim doctrines and literature. The volatility of Islam-related militia is high. While the history of conflict between the world of the West and Islam stretches back for over a millennium, confrontational relations continue to persist to date. The persistent tense threat of Islam to the West is a matter of international interest that require real-time attention. High-profile attacks, including the 9/11 attacks in the United States, the 7/7 bombings in London, the Hamas 10/7 attack on Israel, and the Paris attacks in 2015 threatened the Western security due to causing loss of life, psychological trauma, and heightened security measures. Additionally, the killings, rapes, and violent demonstrations in Germany, Sweden, Denmark and other Western European countries by new immigrants is causing a significant threat to the Western security and safety.

Despite the changing circumstances and tactics, Islam will continue being viewed as a threat to the West's military because of Islam-related militant group's global terrorist attacks. In response to the threat of Islam on the West, countries have implemented laws and policies, such as enhanced border security, counter-radicalization programs, and stricter immigration controls. However, the laws have not achieved the desired levels of strictness because KHA and many other terrorist groups continue to gain access to the US and Europe. However, Islam's threat to the West will persist because Muslim media and schools continue teaching curriculum and presenting doctrines that perpetuate terrorism in the West.

8. Recommendations

The Islamic-related militant groups' terrorist activities are raising eyebrows to the Western society's security apparatus. Defeating Islam-related militant groups requires confronting them an integrated and interagency effort that also target the governments that support and finance them, such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Iran (Iwuoha, 2019). It is necessary for the Western governments to conduct security operations at all levels to include renew commitment to military assistance (troops, financing, training, and intelligence. Increased vigilance about terrorist groups is crucial to eliminate the threat of Islam-related terrorist groups in the West (Wilson Center, 2023). Governments should increase their efforts to weaken militant groups' capacity, finance and cohesion in a bid to counter and prevent violent extremism. Additionally, cracking down movements that inspire religious extremism, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, will reduce the influence by eliminating secular Muslims who hate the western culture and want to change it to Sharia laws.

The primary inspiration for Islamic militant organizations, individuals, and groups stems from the teachings of the Quran, the Hadiths, and the doctrines propagated by Islamic institutions, including Al-Azhar in Egypt, educational establishments in Saudi Arabia, and Hawza (Shia Islamic schools) in Iraq and Iran (Abdo, 2002). In addition, the content that students learn in public schools, Islamic schools, media, and every source in the Islamic world inculcates terrorism ideas among the Muslim community. Notably, Koranic and Hadithic verses tend to inspire 'violence against non-believers', acting as impetus for increased incidences of terrorism in the name of fighting the enemies of Allah. It is critical for the Western society's security apparatus to engage with the ideology of Islamist extremism in a bid to counter the message of death, intolerance, and the pursuit of the afterlife with our own far preferable message of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This should be achieved using film, mass media, and other digital communication systems.

The study showed that the EU has not included Hezbollah in the list of its terrorist organizations due to lack of tangible evidence and having an arm involved in active politics. Leaving the political arm unsanctioned reflects a complex approach to dealing with groups that engage in both political and militant activities, illustrating the challenges the EU faces in addressing terrorism while navigating diplomatic relationships and the multifaceted nature of such organizations. However, it is argued that neither Hezbollah nor Lebanon that it has destabilized recognizes the differences between the political and militant arm. Hence, the EU should include Hezbollah in the list of its terrorist organizations because it has claimed responsibility of terrorist attacks in the name of 'Liberating Jerusalem'. The EU's failure to blacklist Hezbollah in totality has allowed it to

continue fundraising and recruiting in Europe, intensifying the calls for political action to rectify this oversight to support peace efforts in the Middle East and Europe.

A potential approach for Western societies is to collaborate with governments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to remove literature, particularly textbooks that promote extremist ideologies in institutions such as Al-Azhar in Egypt, Islamic schools in Saudi Arabia, Al-Hawza in Iraq and Iran, and other countries where Islamic extremism is prevalent. Reforming the curricula and teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet's hadith in Islamic and Arab educational institutions, both in the MENA region and in Western countries, by excluding interpretations that incite violence, terrorism, and hatred, would be essential. This effort should extend to Islamic schools and preachers worldwide, particularly those in the West, who propagate messages of violence and intolerance. By eliminating such literature from libraries and online platforms, it is possible to gradually reduce the radicalization of Muslims, thereby transforming the global perception of Islam from one associated with terrorism to one that promotes peaceful coexistence.

9. Suggestions for Further Research

Future researchers may investigate specific spectrums of the Western society that Islam is becoming an increasingly a threat to, such as social, political, economic, military, demographic, ideological, and cultural. Moreover, studies adopting primary research methods could illuminate the actual picture of Islam's threat to the West.

10. Conflict of Interest

The research was not conducted in any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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