

Challenge of Globalisation to the Muslim Ummah: Religious Extremism and the Need for Middle Path (*Wasat*)

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Abstract

*Globalisation is a process that encompasses regional hegemonic expansion and culture standardisation through technology, capitalism and world politics. By causing inequality and exploitation, globalisation, due to its economic and political components, has indirectly contributed in the spread of Islamic extremism, which is at most reactionary in nature. The pretext of neo-liberal agenda, which is being implemented through globalisation, has remained one of the primary motivations for repeated Western invasions and interventions in Islamic countries. In the post-9/11 world, unprecedented scrutiny of Islam and the Muslims, other than the massive scale of deaths and bloodsheds, around the globe began to emerge as a dominating theme. The vilification of the Muslim world and the religion itself suggests that the West has failed to live up to its liberal ideals and is ruling the world with double standards. Today, the religious extremism itself amidst the forces of globalisation remains few of the fundamental challenges facing the Muslim Ummah. The assertion that Islamic extremism is a response to Western political and economic domination is mostly rejected by many Western and Muslim scholars as a mere political discourse. There remains a need for academic and intellectual emphasis on this issue in order to enlighten the Muslim masses for better understanding, particularly in the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This study analysed the extent of challenges posed by Islamic extremism and the evolving trends of globalisation, being shaped by the contradictory approach of the West, to Islamic civilisation. To navigate the complexities and turbulence of the present times, it maps out a middle path (*Wasat*) for the Muslim Ummah.*

Keywords: Neoliberalism, Globalisation, Muslim Ummah, Religious Extremism, Wasatiyyah.

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Introduction

The Muslim world entered into an unprecedented era of chaos and uncertainty due to the political, military, economic and ideological circumstances created in the wake of 9/11 and the US-led war on terror. This brought the Muslims and their religion, Islam, into negative light by the West.

Despite the increased scrutiny, most of the western discourse regarding Islam focuses on the actions of Islamic extremist groups.¹ The US-led military campaigns and interventions across the Islamic world for countering terrorism resulted in the damage and loss of human life, which is beyond repair. In various parts of the post-9/11 world, as a result of unrestrained bloodshed and violence, a minor chunk of Muslims followed the path of resistance and opted for violence instead of the path of Islamic moderation. During November 2018 midterm election campaigns, the anti-Muslim rhetoric by various US candidates witnessed a dramatic rise. Even today, the anti-Muslim narrative, as more recently displayed by the Australian Senator, Fraser Anning, in the wake of March 15, 2019, Christchurch Mosque shootings in New Zealand, continues to play a significant role in shaping the US and her allies' policies towards the Muslims countries.

It is often said and realised to a great extent, as well that the ongoing Islamic extremism in the Muslim world and inequality germinating from the West-led neo-liberal globalisation, may cause disruptions in social, cultural and political structures of various countries. Against this backdrop, this study intends to analyse the extent of challenges posed by violent Islamic extremists and neo-liberal globalisation for Islamic civilisation.

Challenges of Globalisation and Religious Extremism

El Sayed explains that extremist groups are those “who hold a view/position far right or left from the middle ground,” the Muslim extremists are a “very loud minority, which is responding to profound

¹ Khaled M Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (San Francisco: Harper One, 2007).

cultural or economic change with violence.”² Their religious response to the cultural or economic change resulting mainly from the US, Western policies or globalisation is by going back to the original doctrinal sources (*usuliyyah*).³ Too few view the Muslim extremists as a “product of Western imperialism”⁴ which appears as a politically and religiously conservative tradition that lies beyond the mainstream Islamic traditions and practices.⁵

Violence or brutality is not inherent in the teachings or central message of any faith system but religious or political movements, most of the time, settle for the selective use of religious scriptures to create a narrow-minded, rigid and extremist ideology for furthering their political objective.⁶ This stands relevant for explaining the attitude of Islamic extremists as the Qur’an categorically condemns violent behaviour. Various Quranic verses mentioned here clearly enforce this fact. The Holy Qur’an adds: “Fight only those who fight you and do not commit aggression”⁷ and “God commands you to treat with compassion and justice those who do not fight you.”⁸

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), indeed, himself is a remarkable example for the Muslims today as He displayed compassion, mercy, kindness and forgiveness to even those who mistreated him and his followers. He taught the Muslims to “show compassion to all on earth.”⁹ The Qur’anic teachings and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) provide clear and unequivocal disapproval and rejection of violence while guiding the Muslims to the path of peace and moderation.

² Chris Chrisman, “Islamic Perspective on Extremism and Moderation,” Annaqad, November 4, 2013, <http://www.annaqad.com/en/muslimsunder-the-microscope/islamic-perspectives-on-extremism-and-moderation>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Gerry Leech, *Crude Interventions: The United States Oil and the New World Disorder* (London: Zed Books, 2006).

⁵ Matthew Francis, “Glossary of Islamic Extremist Material,” Radicalisation Research, March 21, 2017, <https://www.radicalisationresearch.org/guides/glossary-islamic-extremist-material/>

⁶ Nazir Khan, “Doubt, Islamophobia: Forever on Trial—Islam and the Charge of Violence,” Yaqeen, November 16, 2016, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/en/nazir-khan/forever-on-trial-islam-and-the-charge-of-violence/>

⁷ Qur’an, Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 2:190.

⁸ Qur’an, Surah Al-Mumtahanah, Verse 60:8.

⁹ Sunan al-Tirmidhī 1924.

Unfortunately, many Western authors including Bernard Lewis portrayed Islam itself as the cause of extremism and terrorism.¹⁰ Such renowned and remarkable writers including Samuel P Huntington, leave their strong imprints on the US administrations and their foreign policy in the Muslim countries. By using-acts of violent extremists around the world, some Western writers instigate flames of hatred against Islam. Such writers actually indirectly or probably unconsciously serve the interests of violent extremists who capitalise on such scholarly expressions to persuade the Muslims to opt for politico-military confrontation.¹¹

Islamic extremists exploit religious viewpoints and terminologies to extend their own political and ideological objectives. The complexity of the subject exists in their identification with the religion Islam but a deeper analysis of their actions reveals their deliberate and intentional ignorance of the sacred Islamic text and its basic tenets. Their intellectual and ideological positions appear far away from mainstream Islamic traditions, practices and community.¹²

The problem of Islamic extremism has not emerged in a void rather developed in a situation involving political chaos and disorder escalated due to exploitation of the Muslim lands by the West and global dominance of neoliberal capitalist globalisation, which subsequently caused reactionary fanatical ideologues and a population traumatised by West-led colonialism or wars. All this has also resulted in germination of enormous challenges for Islamic civilisation in its way of life since 9/11. Fatmir Shehu calls this “a polite invasion of the Muslim world by the Western imperialism in the twenty-first century.”¹³ Today, the challenges and impact of Islamic extremism and globalisation on Islamic civilisation remain a few of the most discussed topics in intellectual and academic communities of the world. This remains obvious as with about 24 per cent of the world’s

¹⁰ Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Modern Library, 2003).

¹¹ Khan, “Islamophobia.”

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Fatmir Shehu, “Islam - the Future Civilisation of Mankind: Challenges and Responses,” *Journal of Education and Social Sciences* 5 (2016): 14-26, http://jesoc.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/JESOC5_21.pdf.

population affirming Islam as their religion, it is certainly a matter of great academic curiosity.¹⁴

In the prevailing situation, it is also crucial to understand and highlight the challenges that globalisation poses to the Muslim Ummah. In fact, the Muslim Ummah here refers to *Ummah al-Islāmīyah* or Islamic civilisation despite existing diversity within the Muslim world. The concept of Ummah remains significant for Islamic civilisation as the term Ummah appeared sixty-four times in the Holy Qur'an.¹⁵

Categorically, the Muslim Ummah has been challenged by the contemporary political and economic transformations catalysed by globalisation¹⁶ and the emerging Fourth Industrial Revolution. The challenges can be viewed as a result of deliberate, methodological and discreetly organised Western campaign launched against the Muslim Ummah through colonisation in the last two hundred years.¹⁷ It can be deduced that globalisation itself is a historical process encompassing regional hegemonic expansion.¹⁸ In that sense, globalisation might not be a new phenomenon. Its manifested challenges to the Muslim Ummah are wide-ranging and visible¹⁹ as globalisation today remains more expansive in the scale of global influence, which has also contributed, through causing inequality, in the spread of religious extremism including violent Islamic extremism. At present, as per opinions of various scholars, writers and world leaders including Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysian Prime Minister, this globalisation and emerging Fourth Industrial Revolution appear destined to bring many challenges, transformations and instabilities for almost all world civilisations including Islamic civilisation in its cultural, religious and political aspects of life.

¹⁴ Riaz Hassan, "Globalisation's Challenge to Islam," *Yale Global Online*, April 17, 2003, <https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/Globalizations-challenge-islam>

¹⁵ Ahmad S Dallal, Yoginder Sikand and Abdul Rashid Moten, "Ummah," *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Islamic World*, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0818>

¹⁶ Shehu, "Islam - the Future Civilisation of Mankind."

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Thomas L Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalisation* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 9.

¹⁹ Shehu, "Islam - the Future Civilisation of Mankind."

Though, it will not be academically and intellectually convincing to assess the prevailing Islamic extremism without taking a historical perspective into consideration. The genesis of contemporary Islamic extremism can be traced back to the 19th century political or religious movements, which appeared in a reaction to the Muslim weakness in comparison to the British colonial empire and to the incursion of Western secular values, standards and ideals into Muslim societies. Subsequently, Islamic revivalist's thinkers and ideologues with the extremist and ultra-conservative mindset gradually started preaching more radical interpretations of the holy texts for furthering their political aim of Islamic unity and adoption of the Sharia law for effectively countering Western propaganda.²⁰

At the end of World War II in 1945, a new balance of power and international order appeared, mainly comprising of political, military, economic and ideological competition between the Soviet Union and US. The Cold War divided the world along a bipolar system and escalated the supremacy of Western hegemonic economic and political exploitation in various areas of the Islamic world.²¹ There were many factors that contributed to this sad state of affairs:

- i. Lack of political and economic development in the Muslim world.
- ii. The defeat of Syria, Egypt and Jordan by Israel (1968).
- iii. Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979).
- iv. Establishment of the US military bases in Saudi Arabia.
- v. Expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1991.

After these catastrophic events, Islamic extremists gained enormous energy, authority and influence in the various Muslim countries. Various developments including the 1979 Iranian revolution added to the grievances and hopes of an Islamic extremist. The West became aware of Islamic extremism in 1979 when Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran from France due to the Iranian revolution.²² Both Western and the Muslim world were

²⁰ Jonathan Schanzer, "At War With Whom?," Middle East Forum, 2002, <https://www.meforum.org/168/at-war-with-whom>

²¹ Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Inside Jihadism: Understanding Jihadi Movements World Wide* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2009).

²² Emmet Scott, *Mohammed and Charlemagne Revisited: The History of a Controversy* (London: New English Review Press), 2012.

astonished when religious cohesion enabled the Iranian Muslims to overthrow an influential Muslim regime in Iran. In this background, the controversial book, *The Satanic Verses*, published in 1988, also ignited anti-Western feelings among the Muslims in general and violent Islamic extremists in particular. The writings originating from the Islamic world during the 1970s and 1980s criticised the corruption and atheism of the West. From the mid-1970s, the Muslim youth started to listen to these voices.²³ Especially, Muslim thinkers from Egypt to the Indian Subcontinent understood the necessity to revitalise Islamic values along with eradication of Western interference and Westernisation of Islamic societies.²⁴

The most significant event which effectively led to the termination of the Cold War was the Afghan war which started in 1979 and lasted till 1989. During this period, Afghanistan was used as a stage of competing interests and a war proxy by then the two superpowers that exhausted themselves and left Afghanistan with the damage beyond repair. The situation in Afghanistan inflamed the emotions of the Muslims particularly Islamic extremists across the world. The Soviet Union was perceived as the alarming threat to the survival of Afghanistan itself and this was one of the decisive reasons for the Muslims fighting for the US. The end of Afghan war did result in the demise of the Soviet Union but, with it, opened a new chapter of Islamic extremism in the world.

Founded by Osama Bin Laden, al-Qaeda was the first episode of this chapter. This religious militant outfit launched its terrorist campaign against the US and her allies and carried out many terrorist attacks across the world including 9/11. Since the end of the Cold War, Islamic extremism has been associated with the label of a crucial challenge to social, cultural and political structures of various countries particularly too few of the Muslim countries because of its assertive ideological and philosophical foundations.

Today, due to prevalent Islamophobia in Western societies and western media anti-Islamic narrative, the common accusations of terrorism, sometimes are credited to Islam. The cruel and barbaric actions of various violent Islamic extremist groups including al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Christopher Henzel, *The Origins of Al Qaeda's Ideology: Implications for US Strategy* (US Army War College: Parameters, 2005).

Iraq and Syria (ISIS), who categorically try to link Islam with their cruel acts, are also responsible for this deplorable ideological and political situation the Muslims are in today. These erroneous and radical political interpretations of Islam, especially by the leaders of al-Qaeda and ISIS, have introduced to a common Muslim to a new struggle in their daily lives: to stay on defensive footing even when they have nothing to do with the radical extremist mindset.²⁵

Violent extremism has previously emerged at various critical points in human history and, hence, cannot be considered as something entirely new. In the contemporary era, there are many driving factors that contributed to the emergence of religious extremism in the Muslim world such as the role of pro-West repressive governments, undemocratic and authoritarian regimes within and outside the Muslim world. The countries which emerged after disintegration of the Soviet Union instigated extremism on the basis of right-wing racism, which produced wars and led to elemental numbers of human deaths in Bosnia Herzegovina and Rwanda. Since then, such a violent extremist tendency has been expanding in the whole world. In the post-9/11 world, the world is experiencing an extraordinary level of extremist violence, reportedly backed by various states and organisations leading to a deterioration of social, cultural and political structures of various countries. Such violent extremist tendencies are quite evident in ongoing wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Libya, Pakistan and in other parts of the Islamic world and, more recently, the August 2017 genocide of Muslim Rohingyas in Myanmar by Myanmar military and local Buddhist violent extremists.

With the occurrence of 9/11 and many other incidents of terrorism in the world, the 'Clash of Civilisations' thesis further attained valid expressions. This gradually brought negative criticism on the religion of peace that Islam is. Security and media experts often see Islam as the only factor for brewing extremism among Muslims. Frequently, it is depicted as a growing danger to world peace, which is contrary to reality as the majority of the Muslims denounce extremism and violence.²⁶ This depiction also limits and discourages the variety of thoughts within Islam. 9/11 brought religious extremists in the world's focus, leading to a distorted view of Islam and

²⁵ Khan, "Islamophobia."

²⁶ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: The Qur'anic Principle of Wasatiyyah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Muslims. Islam has not been witness to any more violence than one finds in Western civilisations as manifested in colonialism, the World War I and II, the occupations and conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and elsewhere.²⁷

Since 9/11, the Muslim world appears feeling itself under siege and unable to operate in a political and religious atmosphere required for intellectual and religious reasoning. The Muslim world presently appears simply dipped in defensive and survivalist mode. For effectively countering forces of violent extremism in Muslim societies, a change in hegemonic policies of the US and its allies' is essential.²⁸ The formal recognition of the Israeli sovereignty over Golan Heights by the US President Donald Trump, on March 25, 2019, further enforced this perception. Most of Golan Heights were seized from Syria by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War.

The nature of Indo-Israel nexus also remains a continuous source of friction between the Muslims and West. This nature of relations is quite evident by the US massive unrestrained political, military and diplomatic support to the Jewish state in spite of Israel's cruel and unjust occupation of the Palestinian territory and the annexation of Jerusalem.²⁹ More recently in December 2018, Trump recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by shifting the US embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv. Many countries including Australia, Brazil, Romania, Honduras, Slovakia, Guatemala, Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Hungary have expressed similar diplomatic intentions. This decision by the Trump administration caused widespread outrage among the Muslims as this decision is tantamount to the US deliberately ignoring history and position of Palestine on occupied Jerusalem. Washington's emphasis on military pre-emption and political intrusion in the Middle East effectively promote anger among Muslims which is unfortunately exploited by violent Islamic extremists for their political and organisational objectives.

During a January 2015 interview with journalist Lisette Thoof, Karen Armstrong presented a similar argument by declaring that terrorism has nothing to do with Islam. She also added that, historically, there was no antisemitism in the Muslim world rather modern history, missionaries, state

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ali Mazrui, *Resurgent Islam and the Politics of Identity* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

²⁹ Ibid.

of Israel and Western civilisation is responsible for producing such sentiments in the Muslims.³⁰ Discrimination, prejudice, cultural imperialism and physical occupation towards weak underdeveloped nations of the Middle East, Asia and Africa remained the hallmarks of Western powers during various time periods of history, which invited anger, hostility, political and ideological reaction that has caused initiation of political movements and religious struggles in various parts of the world.³¹ Zafar Bangash, while identifying the inherent cause of the Western sense of superiority, explains that it is their imperious arrogance and confidence in the self-perceived excellence of their value and cultural system over other value systems including Islamic.³²

As referred earlier, after 9/11, many in the West accused Islam of advocating violence and radicalism. This also remains one of the major Western discourse on Islam and extremism since tragic events of 9/11. Many writers and thinkers including Daniel Pipes, Paul Wolfowitz, Bernard Lewis, Oriana Fallaci, Taslima Nasreen, Robert Spencer, Sam Harris, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and many more like them who claim that Islam is a religion of violence and the Muslims are terrorists. They often see Islam solely responsible for extremism in Muslims. Such writers have been generating incorrect, distorted and fabricated information about the Muslims and Islam for gaining access to western media and political platforms.

Scholars such as Tariq Modood, Ali Mazuri, Chandra Muzaffar, Tariq Ramadan, Hashim Kamali, Karen Armstrong and many others who disagree with the Western Islamophobic narratives. Such thinkers and writers emphasise on portrayals of the Muslims living in the West and the respective treatment they are acquiring. They also reason that linking Islam with terrorism is merely a demonstration of a more firmly established and

³⁰ Lisette Thoof, "Karen Armstrong: There is nothing in the Islam that is more Violent than Christianity," *Nieuw Wij*, January 18, 2015, <https://www.nieuwwij.nl/english/karen-armstrong-nothing-islam-violent-christianity/>

³¹ Nicolas Brooklier, "Islamophobia: The Stereotyping and Prejudice Towards Muslims Since 9/11," Washington State University, December 17, 2015, <https://hub.wsu.edu/law-justice-realtme/2015/12/17/islamophobia-the-stereotyping-and-prejudice-towards-muslims-since-911/>

³² Zafar Bangash, "McDonaldisation of Culture: America's Pervasive Influence Globally," *Crescent International*, February 15, 1998, <https://crescent.icit-digital.org/articles/mcdonaldization-of-culture-america-s-pervasive-influence-globally>

inherent bitterness in the West, which deserves to be recognised as the severe and venomous shape of racism and intolerance. Armstrong explains that the word Islam is associated with peace. She notes that it would be highly inaccurate to view Osama bin Laden as a legitimate representation of Islam. Even still, as many in the West do, viewing Osama bin Laden and many like him as a legitimate representation of Islam is greatly upsetting and such a sinister view only facilitates and promotes the behaviour patterns that lead to intolerance and trigger a political and cultural campaign to frame even those Muslims who wish no harm.³³ Recent outrageous political travels bans and strict visa regimes in the US and other European countries further support this notion. This was also one of the main issues remained under discussions during G-20 summit held in Hamburg, Germany from July 8, 2017.³⁴

As referred earlier, that implementation of neo-liberal capitalist agenda through globalisation remains one of the significant reasons causing divisions and polarisation among rich and poor of the world today. With the emergence of unfair trade rules governing globalisation and, more importantly, continuous Western double standards, interventions in the Muslim countries and the consequent violent extremism has ramifications that go beyond state systems. The most recent result of this process is the ISIS which originated as an outcome from the turmoil resulted from the American invasion of Iraq.³⁵

Most of the extremists conduct among Muslims is reactive and associated with military hostility, humiliating violence and economic exploitation through unfair trade rules by bigger political and military powers.³⁶ Islamic extremism is a resistance to exploitation and domination mounted by the US and other Western powers that have acted with immense unjustified military and economic assertiveness in organising and sustaining the prevailing political and economic World Order.³⁷

³³ Karen Armstrong, "The True, Peaceful Face of Islam," *Time*, September 15, 2001, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,175987,00.html>

³⁴ Brooklier, "Islamophobia."

³⁵ Mona Miasami, "Islam and Globalisation," *Fountain*, July 1, 2003, <https://fountainmagazine.com/2003/issue-43-july-september-2003/Islam-and-Globalization>

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Christopher Chase-Dunn, *Global Formation: Structures of the World-Economy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998)

The assertion that Islamic extremism is a response to Western political and economic domination appears sufficiently realistic and deserves credibility. Plundering of the Muslim resources, ruling the world with double standards, Western support for Israel, intrusion in the Middle Eastern politics and the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan have put the US/West in conflict with violent Islamic extremists, which has also caused increase in terror attacks against Western countries and pro-Western Muslim governments in Islamic world. These conditions appear as validation for extremist actions and are used to acquire sympathy for terrorist acts against innocent people of all faiths.

The political backlash to globalisation-led inequality is even visible in Europe as well. The ‘yellow vest’ protests and anti-government demonstrations in France, the UK’s rejection of EU, the rise of populist parties across Europe, the Republican Green New Deal in the US are enough to prove that economic model of neoliberal capitalism is extremely faulty. Moreover, it has played a vital role in increasing income equality and resulting in increasing gap between the rich and the poor of the world, which creates more haves and have not and generates more grievances among underdeveloped and vulnerable nations particularly in the Muslim world. This gap itself is responsible for producing political and religious extremism. The advent of modern technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution further added to these unfortunate trends. Klaus Schwab in his article, “Shaping the Fourth Industrial Revolution” has cautioned that irrespective of great outcomes of emerging Fourth Industrial Revolution, it still can cause marginalisation and inequality for the few, create security and political risks and can undermine human relationships and identity.³⁸ In the same article, Schwab has called for putting an end to the elite supremacy.³⁹

Neo-liberalism expects supremacy of the markets by promoting free trade, global integration, by removing the interference of the state in the economic affairs for the capitalist elite. This predatory economic attitude, as

³⁸ Klaus Schwab, “Shaping the Fourth Industrial Revolution,” Project Syndicate, January 11, 2016, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/fourth-industrial-revolution-human-development-by-klaus-schwab-2016-01?barrier=accesspaylog>

³⁹ Abdulla Mohammed Al Awar, “The Fourth Industrial Revolution from Islamic Economy’s Perspective,” *HuffPost*, October 7, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/abdulla-mohammed-al-awar/the-fourth-industrial-rev_2_b_12189838.html

also manifested by the ongoing US-China trade war, may breed extremism in the world as competing for economic visions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are igniting unrestrained power politics. Prevalent economic inequality and rising unemployment due to numerous reasons like automation of jobs can create instability, anger, resentment, tensions or protests within the Muslim societies.⁴⁰

Today, Islamic extremism and climate change movement are the strongest reactions to neoliberal capitalist globalisation. One of the most enduring challenges to social, cultural and political structures of various countries is posed by Islamic extremists and globalisation. Both Islamic extremists and globalisation are, in their own way, acting to limit sovereignty and integrity of the state's writ in underdeveloped countries particularly in the Islamic World. With the emergence of globalisation and more importantly, continuous Western double standards and interventions in the Muslim countries, the threat from violent Islamic extremism goes beyond state systems. Anxiety over the presence of the American military in the Middle East and the implications of the US invasions and subsequent wars, push a few Muslims to act with extreme violence as Muslim grievances against the West's invasions and economic as well as political exploitations are considered valid but still unaddressed by West. Since last few years, a consistent and lethal military campaign spearhead by the US and her allies is in progress to counter violent Islamic extremism mostly spearheaded by al-Qaeda and ISIS, counter-terrorism military campaign led by West all over these years.

Unless, the brutal Western hegemonic interventions, economic or political imperialism through neo-liberal capitalist globalisation and double standards for the Muslim countries, which are even practised till today by the West, are stopped, the forces of violent Islamic extremism will continue to strike back when they will have the opportunity. They may be operationally dormant for the time being but their ideology will continue to ignite their anger, frustration and grievances against West particularly the US. In such a scenario, history guides, the violent outcome may be more lethal than the past violent outcomes.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Jamal Sanad Al Suwaidi, "World Braces for a major Social Transformation," *Gulf News*, October 2, 2018, <https://gulfnews.com/opinion/op-eds/world-braces-for-a-major-social-transformation-1.2285515>

⁴¹ Leech, "Crude Interventions."

Today, modern technological means including advancement in communications through social media are available to violent Islamic extremists, which they are effectively using to attract youth from diverse backgrounds and countries. The speed and magnitude of information communication technologies that are aiding globalisation and free trade appear to be equally helping Islamic extremism in the extension of their objectives. To some extent, the contemporary Muslim societies with neglect of science and technology, are not sufficiently informed and are in a weak position due to illiteracy, uncontrolled population growth, depleting resources, less spending on human capital development and lack of development to prevent them from such a threat. This inability may contribute to fuelling ethnic, nationalist or religious extremism to counter foreign cultures or to preserve identity or local cultures from disappearance.

The terrorist activities of 9/11 have made the world realise that double standards, hegemonic military interventions and economic or political imperialism against the Muslim world by powerful neo-liberal capitalist regimes will always invite severe and violent reactions from Islamic extremists. Though these severe and violent reactions from violent Islamic extremists can never be justified as per teachings of Islam.

Islamic extremists assert that they symbolise Islam in its genuine and right shape. This claim of Islamic extremists remains false and away from reality as there is a fundamental doctrinal division between the mainstream and the extremist thoughts. A specific set of doctrines separates violent Islamic extremists from the mainstream Islamic community. Comprehension of this division is crucial in designing an intellectual and political effort for opposing the radical doctrines and assisting all efforts within and initiated by mainstream Islamic community for limiting violent extremist viewpoints and resorting to the centrality of peace in Islam. This can play a vital role in taking away any form of Islamic extremist assertions to religious validity.⁴²

Need for Middle Path (*Wasat*)

It is not only challenging particularly to the Western order but also preventing the spread of Islam, hence, we need a theoretical understanding on how to counter Islamic extremism by employing the Qur'anic concept of

⁴² Khan, "Islamophobia."

Wasatiyyah (moderation). Today, the adaptation and propagation of the middle (*Wasat*) path of Islam can become a very important effort to counter and develop non-violent alternatives to violent Islamic extremism from within Muslim societies. Exploring a moderate path remains within theological reach of Islamic thinkers as the concept of moderation is not a new philosophy and has a foundation deeply-rooted in Islam's concept of *Wasatiyyah*, which is the middle path.

The true understanding of Islam only can show a way out of this present predicament of Islamic extremism in the post-9/11 world. The challenges germinating from Islamic extremism to stability of social, cultural and political structures of various countries can be dealt with by practising Islamic concept of *Wasatiyyah*, which promotes moderation. The exceptional expansion of violent Islamic extremism allegedly supported both by few individuals and some states in various parts of the world has further stressed the importance of the need of *Wasatiyyah*.⁴³ Religion-based efforts need to be carried out in order to fight Islamic extremism, which is by applying the *Wasatiyyah* concept. This is emphasised in the Qur'an and Hadith. The objective is to contain extremism in all aspect of life.⁴⁴

According to MS Hanapi, *Wasatiyyah* is an Arabic term derived from the word *Wasat*. This term was taken and elaborated from the word *ummatan wasatan* (the moderate people), which is established in the words of Allah SWT: "We have made you into a balanced community so that you bear witness before humankind and the Messenger bear witness before you (Al-Baqarah 2:143)."⁴⁵ "You are the best community singled out for humankind; you order what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah (Al 'Imran 3:110)."

The opposition of moderation is extremism (*tatarruf*), which as per Islamic perspective applies to one who exceeds the decrees or guidance of Shariah, disrupts the limits of *Wasatiyyah*, ignores the views of the majority

⁴³ Kamali, "The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam," 54.

⁴⁴ M S Hanapi, "The *Wasatiyyah* (Moderation) Concept in Islamic Epistemology: A Case Study of its Implementation in Malaysia," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 4 (2014): 51-62

⁴⁵ The term *al-wasatiyyah* is also used in other verses as well, such as *al-wusta* (al-Baqarah, 2:238), *awsat* (al-Ma'idah, 5:89), *awsatuhum* (al-Qalam, 68:28), *fawasatna* (al-'Adiyat, 100:5).

(*ra'y al-jamā'ah*) and acts in a way that is routinely considered bizarre and abnormal.⁴⁶ Islam's peaceful co-existence with other religions, during the days of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), serves as a major source for encouraging mutual ideals between individuals of different religions. Such a peaceful co-existence without undermining essentials of different faiths remains an important message of *Wasatiyyah* as it promotes tolerance for values of other faiths and cultures.⁴⁷

Conclusion

Islamic Ummah in the given global environment needs a realisation to formulate a serious critique of the world order.⁴⁸ It must make decisions with their genuine implementation for effectively preserving their faith and way of life⁴⁹ by managing and limiting the harmful effects of violent Islamic extremism and globalisation. The views propagated by anti-Islamic forces and Islamic extremists must be refuted with realistic and unbiased analysis of the subject of Islam and extremism. Islamic extremism intimidates the majority of Muslims and requires joint effort to contain it in all spheres of life. Promotion of interfaith dialogue is also the need of the hour. In this context, the recent signing of a “document on human fraternity” by Pope Francis and Ahmed el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, during Pope's recent visit to the United Arab Emirates at the beginning of February 2019, is a remarkable effort. Interfaith measures like this and those based on Islam are need of the time to contain the menace of extremism by employing the *Wasatiyyah* concept. Extensive and widespread application of *Wasatiyyah* can also play a vital role in promoting unity within Islamic Ummah.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Datuk Nasharudin Mat Isa, “Rooting out Extremism, Building Harmony, acceptance,” *New Straits Times*, April 28, 2017, <https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2017/04/234518/rooting-out-extremism-building-harmony-acceptance>

⁴⁸ Ramadan Tariq, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴⁹ Abdul Razak, “Globalisation and Some of its Impact on Muslim Education and Culture,” *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilisation* 1, (1) (2011): 59-69. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6755/164a1d162cda9ec2b000518f27c8fc5f7dc6.pdf>