

Jihadis and the Use of the Terms Terror, Terrorist, and Terrorism: A Contextual and Semantic Understanding from Islamic Tradition

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Synopsis

Previous studies on the usage of the terms terror, terrorist, and terrorism have taken a Western perspective on how these terms should be defined and then deployed, but the viewpoint of the “terrorist” (in this case jihadis) has yet to be examined. This study analyzes how jihadis understand these terms and critically assesses their interpretation based on classical Islamic doctrine. The basis and “proof” for jihadis’ legitimization of using terror is based upon the Qur’anic verse 8:60, but when taken into context and traditional understanding, jihadis miss the mark. Yet, at the same time, when exploring the linguistic root for the terms in classical Arabic it convolutes the matter since in that context it provides somewhat of a positive cover.

Biography

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Essay

The past ten years since the September 11th attacks have seen a plethora of new research in the field of terrorism studies. One area within this field has been a debate over terminology: how does one define the term terror, terrorist, or terrorism and how does one use it when referencing an individual or organization? Indeed, it is beneficial for those working in government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations as well as policy makers, to debate terminology and its practical use. There is another perspective, though, that has not been systematically researched, which is how do individuals who are considered terrorists or conduct terrorism – in the case of this study jihadis (whom will be defined below) – view and use these terms in their own media and ideological tracts.

To fill this lacuna in the literature, this research hopes to shed light on an understudied yet potentially fruitful sub-area of study that other researchers could build upon or use in a comparative study of other types of terrorist movements. Prior to examining the jihadi sources, it was hypothesized that jihadis used the

terms terror (*al-Arhab*), terrorist (*irahabi*), and terrorism (*irhab*) in a positive light to deflect any negative connotations it had and that jihadis are twisting aspects of Islamic tradition to do so. Methodologically, the study uses a textual analysis of jihadi primary source literature to examine how they internally understand the three terms mentioned above. It also uses aspects of linguistic methods such as etymology, pragmatics, and semantics to better understand the terms in the context of classical Islamic tradition, as well as the evolution of Arabic from its classical understanding to its modern form.

After examining primary source materials and analyzing it in light of Islamic tradition, this study found the following: (1) jihadis appropriate the words terror, terrorist and terrorism in their propaganda to invert the meaning and transform it into a positive moniker to neutralize the stigmatized and pejorative use of these terms in discourse against them; (2) jihadis main source to legitimize the use of the terms terror, terrorism, and terrorist comes from the Qur'an, and specifically *surat* (chapter) *al-Anfal* (spoils of war) *ayah* (verse) sixty, yet its understanding of the *ayah* does not hold up to scrutiny when understanding it in the context of Islamic tradition; (3) jihadis understand and use the meaning of the terms terror, terrorist, and terrorism in the Qur'anic Arabic sense, which is a different than how it is understood in modern standard Arabic (or in English) based on the linguistics of the Arabic roots for the term: *r-h-b*, which provides a level of legitimacy to their arguments; and (4) jihadis mostly use the terms in a political rather than religious manner even if they are attempting to make it appear that they have religious sanction and legitimacy to act out using terroristic types of behavior.

To elaborate on these findings, this study is broken into two sections. The first section analyses the manner in which some of the leading jihadi leaders and/or intellectuals have used the terms terror (*al-Arhab*), terrorist (*irahabi*), and terrorism (*irhab*) in their propaganda since the Afghan jihad in the 1980s against the former Soviet Union. The second section examines the terms in the context of classical Islamic doctrine to better appreciate and understand why and how jihadis use it, as well as to critically assess whether jihadis are using them in the correct manner or are altering its interpretation.

Before turning to this study, though, it is worthwhile to define who is being referred to when the term jihadi is used. By jihadi, this study refers to individuals who believe in the global jihadi ideology that was first theorized by 'Abdullah 'Azzam, a Jordanian of Palestinian origin who led the Afghan Arab contingent in the Afghan jihad in the 1980s, and later refined by Usama bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida, as well as its global supporters and adherents either in branches, subsidiaries, affiliates, or online grassroots networks. The term jihadi in this context does not refer to nationalist-Islamist individuals or organizations such as HAMAS or Hizbullah. It also does not include non-violent global Caliphatist movements like Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Jihadi Usage of Terror, Terrorist, and Terrorism

To consider how jihadis have used the terms terror (*al-Arhab*), terrorist (*irahabi*), and terrorism (*irhab*), the study will examine the works and spoken words of four key figures in the intellectual history of contemporary global jihadism: (1) ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam; (2) Sayyid Imam al-Sharif; (3) Usama bin Ladin; and (4) Abu Mus’ab al-Suri.

The appropriation of the terms terror, terrorist, and/or terrorism in jihadi ideology to denote a positive characteristic or attribute was first popularized in the work and *khutbas* (sermons) of ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam during the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan in the 1980s. ‘Azzam fills a crucial niche in jihadi lore due to his unique role as a charismatic leader-martyr who is viewed as the godfather of the global jihadi movement. Two of ‘Azzam’s most popular quotes by his followers comes from his defiance and twisting of the terms terrorist and terrorism to place them in a positive light. The first was written in one of his tracts:

Love of *jihad* has taken over my life, my soul, my sensation, my heart and my emotions. If preparing [for *jihad*] is terrorism (*irhab*), then we are terrorists (*irahabiyyun*). If defending our honor is extremism, then we are extremists. If *jihad* against our enemies is fundamentalism, then we are fundamentalists (qtd. Musallam 191; Nasiri 151).

Another example comes from one of ‘Azzam’s many *khutbas* where he states: “We are terrorists (*irahabiyyun*) and terrorism (*irhab*) is our way. So let the West and East know that we are terrorists (*irahabiyyun*) and that we are horrifying” (‘Azzam). ‘Azzam then provides a “proof” to religiously legitimize his claim by quoting the Qur’anic verse: “And prepare against them what force you can, including steeds of war, to strike terror (*turhibun*) into (the hearts of) the enemies, of Allah and your enemies” (*al-Anfal* 8:60). Below, this study will examine more in depth the above *ayah* in its context and how it was classically and traditionally understood.

This study now turns to how Sayyid Imam al-Sharif also known by his *nom de guerre* Dr. Fadl, a former leader (*amir*) of Egyptian Islamic Jihad in the 1980s and early 1990s, understood the terms terrorist and terrorism. On November 24, 2007, a draft of a book that Dr. Fadl wrote, *al-Irhab min al-Islam wah min Ankar thalik faqad Kufr* (*Terrorism Is from Islam and Whoever Denies That Is an Infidel*), was posted to a jihadi website. According to an introduction to the draft, Dr. Fadl did not complete the book because he was arrested by Yemeni authorities and then later extradited to Egypt.

The way Dr. Fadl uses of the terms terrorist and terrorism is an important insight into jihadi thinking and how they rationalize their *Weltanschauung*. It provides a window because Dr. Fadl is viewed as an important cog in the intellectual history of jihadi ideology as a result of his complex arguments that justified violence and

the use of *takfir* (pronouncing a fellow Muslim an apostate). One of the key arguments in the jihadi narrative is that the West is at war with Islam. Therefore, by claiming that terrorism is from Islam, Dr. Fadl is trying to tie in the above argument why the West and its allies are truly trying to fight terrorism. In a similar fashion to ‘Azzam, Dr. Fadl refers to the Qur’anic verse *al-Anfal* 8:60 and states:

According to this verse, terrorizing (*irhab*) the infidels (*al-kuffar*) enemies is a religious duty (*wajib shari’i*), and he who denies it is an infidel (*kufr*) ... He who says that Islam is innocent of terrorism (*al-irhab*) or tries to differentiate between them is an infidel (*kufr*) (al-Sharif).

This leads to Dr. Fadl’s next point, arguing that the West’s so-called “war on terrorism” or counterterrorism approach is actually a war on Islam or counter-Islam since as he states above, terrorism is from Islam:

Therefore, you should know that those who say that they want to fight terrorism (*al-irhab*) actually mean they want to fight Islam. Counterterrorism means counter-Islam. They are confusing the facts for the ignorant (al-Sharif).

Although Dr. Fadl does not directly name the West or the United States, there is no doubt he is referring to them since he later states:

America is an infidel (*kafira*) and enemy and terrorizing it is a duty. Not only is it an infidel but it insists on fighting, harming, and tightening the noose around the Muslims, usurping the wealth of their countries, and helping those who fight Muslims from among the Jews, Turks, infidel rulers, and others ... America interferes in the affairs of all of the world's countries under different pretexts, sometimes under the pretext of peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, or for humanitarian reasons. These pretexts are outwardly merciful while inwardly torturous (al-Sharif).

These proclamations by Dr. Fadl, therefore, provide a three-fold argument: (1) using terrorism is acceptable within Islamic tradition; (2) denying this is only what a *kufir* would say, which further justifies jihadis’ use of *takfir* and ability to then be allowed to attack such an individual; and (3) reinforcing the overarching jihadi narrative that the West is at war with Islam and terrorism is just a euphemism the West uses to hide its true intentions. As a result, Dr. Fadl’s arguments provide strong so-called religious “proofs” for jihadi adherents and potential recruits who are already somewhat sympathetic to the cause (or at least distrust the West), thereby building upon ‘Azzam’s prior statements.

The recently deceased leader of al-Qa’ida, Usama bin Ladin, also turned the tables on those that have described him and his tactics as terroristic by using the

terms in a positive fashion. In a 1996 interview with the Australian Islamist publication *Nidal ul-Islam* bin Laden stated:

We were accused of funding terrorism (*irhab*), and being members of an international terrorist organization (*munzama irhabiyya*). Their aims in making these allegations were to place psychological pressure on the *mujahidin* and their supporters so that they would forsake the obligation of jihad and the resistance of oppression and American Israeli occupation of Islamic sacred lands. However, our gratitude to Allah, their campaign was not successful, as terrorizing (*irhab*) the American occupiers is a religious and logical obligation (Mujahid).

Bin Laden elaborated upon this in a 1998 interview answering questions from his supporters:

Terrorism (*irhab*) can be commendable and it can be reprehensible. Terrifying an innocent person and terrorizing (*irhab*) him is objectionable and unjust, also unjustly terrorizing (*irhab*) people is not right. Whereas, terrorizing oppressors (*irhab al-zalamin*) and criminals and thieves and robbers is necessary for the safety of people and for the protection of their property. There is no doubt in this. Every state and every civilization and culture has to resort to terrorism under certain circumstances for the purpose of abolishing tyranny and corruption. Every country in the world has its own security system and its own security forces, its own police and its own army. They are all designed to terrorize whoever even contemplates to attack that country or its citizens. The terrorism (*irhab*) we practice is of the commendable kind for it is directed at the tyrants (*tawaghit*) and the aggressors and the enemies of Allah, the tyrants (*tawaghit*), the traitors who commit acts of treason against their own countries and their own faith and their own prophet and their own nation. Terrorizing (*irhab*) those and punishing them are necessary measures to straighten things and to make them right (Interview).

Bin Laden also emphasized these points, echoing 'Azzam's arguments in an interview he did with al-Jazeera's Tayseer Allouni in October 2001, a month after the 9/11 attacks, when bin Laden stated in regard to Allouni's question about the attacks on New York and Washington: "If inciting for this is terrorism (*irhab*), and if killing the ones that kill our sons is terrorism (*irhab*), then let history witness that we are terrorists (*irhabiyyun*)."

Later, in the interview, bin Laden uses a different Arabic term for terror (*ra'b*). This differs from bin Laden's earlier examples as well as the ones from 'Azzam and Dr. Fadl, where they use the common term for terrorism (*irhab*) in modern standard Arabic. (The understanding of these terms

will be further examined below). For now, here is the quote from bin Laden where he uses terror in a different manner:

[As] they kill us, without a doubt we have to kill them, until we obtain a balance in terror (*tawaazun fi-l-ru'b*). This is the first time that the scale of terror (*al-Arhab*) got closer between both sides, between the Muslims and the Americans in these recent times (Allouni).

Unlike in the above examples from 'Azzam's, Dr. Fadl's, and Bin Ladin's earlier quotes, Bin Ladin makes his case based more on politics than on a religious command or need. This more political nature will be further examined in the work of the last jihadi ideologue Mustafa bin 'Abd al-Qadir Sitt Mariyyam Nasar, better known by his *nom de guerre* Abu Mus'ab al-Suri.

Bin Laden's theory about commendable terrorism was taken to its most logical end when Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, a Syrian freelance jihadi who is currently believed to be in a Syrian prison and is considered one of the most influential jihadi strategists, wrote a theory on legitimate versus illegitimate terrorism. This was written in a section of his more than 1,600-page jihadi treatise *Da'wat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah al-'Alamiyyah (The Call of Global Islamic Resistance)* under his pen name 'Umar 'Abd al-Hakim, which was released to the online jihadi forums in 2004. The section on the two types of terrorisms have been very popular to the online grassroots jihadis. It has been reproduced in many jihadi forums/publications, but most recently was translated into English for al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula's English language *Inspire Magazine* to try to bring this message to a Western audience.

Prior to detailing al-Suri's definition of different types of terrorisms, he makes it a point to mention that he "thinks that one of the most important fields of success in the recent American Jewish Crusader campaigns is that on the media front. It has succeeded in imposing terminologies and definitions of people, and in forcing upon humanity a meaning of these terminologies, corresponding with their view" (al-Hakim 1374). Al-Suri emphatically concludes that they "refuse to understand this term according to the American description" (al-Hakim 1374). Like the above thinkers, al-Suri's main basis for his understanding of the terms terror, terrorism, and terrorist comes from the Qur'anic verse 8:60: "The verse is clear in its text and unambiguous in its meaning" (al-Hakim 1376). From al-Suri's interpretations he believes there are two types of terrorism: blameworthy terrorism (*irhab madhmum*) and praiseworthy terrorism (*irhab mahmud*). Al-Suri considers the jihadis' terrorism *irhab mahmud* while the terrorism of the United States and its allies as well as the so-called Arab apostate regimes is *irhab madhmum*. The two terms are defined as follows:

irhab madhmum: It is the terrorism of falsehood (*irhab al-batil*) and force of falsehood (*quwwa al-batil*); it can be defined as every

action, speech, or behavior which inflicts harm and fear among the innocent without a true cause. This kind of terrorism includes the terrorism of thieves, highway robbers, invaders, and assailants, and the terrorism of oppressors and un-rightful rulers of people, such as the Pharaohs and their servants ... This is blameworthy terrorism, and its perpetrator is a 'criminal terrorist' (*irhabi mujrim*) who deserves to be punished for terrorism and its crime according to its damage and impact.

irhab mahmud: This is the opposite of blameworthy terrorism. It is terrorism by the righteous that have been unjustly treated. It removes injustice from the oppressed. This is undertaken through terrorizing and repelling the oppressor. The terrorism of the security men who fought against thieves and highway robbers is of this kind as is the terrorism of those who resist occupation, and the terrorism of people defending themselves against the servants of satan (*shaytan*). This is praise worthy terrorism (al-Hakim 1374-75).¹

Al-Suri's understanding of *irhab mahmud* has some basis in Islamic tradition, insofar as it relates to how al-Suri as well as the others above interpret the meaning of *irhab*, which this study will turn to next.

Terror in the Qur'an and Classical Islamic Tradition

This section will examine two aspects of how the terms terror, terrorism, and terrorist are understood in the context of the Qur'an and Islamic intellectual tradition: (1) analysis of the Qur'anic verse 8:60 and its intent based on classical Islamic tradition and (2) investigate how the term terror is understood in classical Arabic by looking at its linguistic history compared with modern standard Arabic.

Dr. Muhammad A. S. Abdel Haleem, professor of Islamic Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies and who also recently translated the Qur'an into English, in a recent article in *The Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, analyzed misconceptions about certain Qur'anic verses used by jihadis to justify violence. One of the verses was 8:60. According to Dr. Abdel Haleem, many misinterpret the verse as an offensive military dictum. Part of this is a result of individuals isolating verses and coming up with interpretations of them by not taking context and grammar into account. Dr. Abdel Haleem suggests using tools that classical Muslim exegetes used when analyzing an *ayah* by looking at the *ayah* before and after to gain proper perspective. In this case *ayah* 8:55-8:63 (8:60 is bolded):

¹ More on this can be found in Lahoud, Nelly. *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010 and Rogan, Hanna. "Al-Qaeda's online media strategies- From Abu Reuter to *Irhabi 007*." *Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI)*. FFI-rapport 2007/02729. 12 Jan 2007.

For the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are those who reject Him: They will not believe. They are those with whom thou didst make a covenant, but they break their covenant every time, and they have not the fear (of Allah). If ye gain the mastery over them in war, disperse, with them, those who follow them that they may remember. If thou fearest treachery from any group, throw back (their covenant) to them, (so as to be) on equal terms: for Allah loveth not the treacherous. Let not the unbelievers think that they can get the better (of the godly): they will never frustrate (them). **Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror (*turhibun*) into (the hearts of) the enemies, of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom Allah doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of Allah, shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly.** But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah: for He is One that heareth and knoweth (all things). Should they intend to deceive thee, verily Allah sufficeth thee: He it is That hath strengthened thee with His aid and with (the company of) the Believers; And (moreover) He hath put affection between their hearts: not if thou hadst spent all that is in the earth, couldst thou have produced that affection, but Allah hath done it: for He is Exalted in might, Wise.²

In fact, Dr. Abdel Haleem claims that when taken into context of the verses before and after it, one would be hard pressed to identify 8:60 as a call for aggressive military action, like jihadis would. Rather, the verse is a guide for how one should deter an enemy. It is also evident that it is in regard to political entities that continuously break treaties, which jihadis overlook. In the verse following 8:60, it also shows that primacy is given to peace rather than war if possible, further undermining any claim that 8:60 condones offensive and aggressive warfare.

Although it appears when one scrutinizes *ayah* 8:60 that jihadis misunderstand it and that it provides more “proof” for the argument that jihadis are twisting Islam, the *ayah*, though, does not provide the full picture. It gets more complicated when one analyzes the linguistic root and understanding for the terms terror, terrorism, and terrorist in classical Arabic. Contrary to verse 8:60, which discredits ‘Azzam, Dr. Fadl, bin Laden, and al-Suri using it to justify terror and

² For more on this see the *tafsīr* (Qur’anic commentary) of Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Abdullāh. *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās*. Trans. Mokrane Guezzo. Amman, Jordan: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007 and al-Maḥall, Jalāl al-Dīn and al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn. *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. Trans. Feras Hamz. Amman, Jordan: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007.

portray it as admirable, the linguistic understanding of the terms actually provides ammunition to their argument.

To understand the term terror in its classical and Qur'anic Arabic context, it is usually analyzed alongside other terms related to fear. According to the *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, there are nine such terms. Two of them relate to this discussion and have the roots *r-h-b* and *r-'-b*, which were mentioned above. The former and its derivatives are mentioned eight times in the Qur'an, while the latter and its derivatives are attributed five times (Alexander 194). In the case of *r-h-b* and its derivatives (*rahb*, *rahba*, *irhab*) at the basic level it means "reverent fear" and "awe." And this is directed toward God (Alexander 197). Therefore, from a linguistic perspective, *r-h-b* is viewed in a positive light. The second root, *r-'-b*, connotes paralyzing "terror" or "fright." Four of the five times this root is mentioned in the Qur'an it is in the context of retribution due to the perfidy of the enemies of Islam (Alexander 198). It is, therefore, fascinating that bin Laden uses the phrase *tawaazun fi-l-ru'b* (balance in terror) since it would mean that the United States is using terror against those who deceive it (i.e. al-Qa'ida and its supporters), which would mean bin Laden is admitting to his deceptive tactics, though he probably did not mean it in that manner.

The root *r-h-b*, plays a more important and substantial role, though, in jihadi propaganda since that is the primary root and its derivatives when they discuss terror, terrorist, and/or terrorism. The meaning of the terms terror, terrorist, and terrorism differ in modern standard Arabic from classical Arabic, which confuses the issue since jihadis understand this and exploit the differences.

According to Dr. Waleed El-Ansary, Department Chair of Islamic Studies at Xavier University, in an essay, "Revisiting the Qur'anic Basis For the Use of War Language," states: "Bin Laden himself uses the difference between the classical and modern meanings of *irhab* (terrorism) to validate his claim to legitimacy on the one hand and support his argument that the war on terror is war against Islam on the other" (El-Ansary 64). Dr. El-Ansary further explains that based on the linguistic understanding for the term *irhabi* or terrorist, one being called an *irhabi* would be understood as an individual who is a God-fearing, peace-loving, attack-detering monk, which provides semantic problems since *irhabi* in modern standard Arabic is understood as terrorist as in the way it is in the West. As a result, jihadis use a tricky, yet innovative semantic sleight of hand. Therefore, when one hears jihadis state that they are terrorists their understanding of it is much different from most individuals'.

Similar to the debates in the United States about the primacy of what al-Qa'ida and like-minded groups should be described as and how they should be defined - - terrorists, extremists, Islamic militants, jihadis, etc. - as result of the linguistic problems with the use of terms related to the root *r-h-b*, Dr. El-Ansary believes - based on discussions he has had with the Grand Mufti of Egypt Shaykh 'Ali Goma'ah - that a more legally precise term should be used to describe terrorist

instead of *irhabi* due to its positive connotations in Qur'anic Arabic. He believes *irjafi* (subversion and scaremongering, to bring quaking and commotion to society) should be used instead since it has such negative connotations in classical Islamic tradition (El-Ansary 67).³ Examining Dr. El-Ansary's arguments about the use of *irjafi*, though, is beyond the scope of this paper.

In light of the above discussion, one can see how complicated and tangled some these linguistic problems can get. The basis and "proof" for jihadis' legitimization of using terror is based upon the Qur'anic verse 8:60, but when taken into context and traditional understanding, 'Azzam, Dr. Fadl, bin Laden, and al-Suri miss the mark. Yet, at the same time, when exploring the linguistic root for the terms terror, terrorism, and terrorist in classical Arabic it complicates the matter since in that context it provides somewhat of a positive cover.

Conclusion

This study attempted to examine jihadi thought over time as it relates to their internal use of the terms terror, terrorism, and terrorist to better appreciate how they are understood in their mindset. This study shows that: (1) jihadis appropriate the words terror, terrorist and terrorism in their propaganda to invert the meaning and transform it into a positive moniker to neutralize the stigmatized and pejorative use of these terms in discourse against them; (2) jihadis main source to legitimize the use of the terms terror, terrorism, and terrorist comes from the Qur'an, and specifically *surat* (chapter) *al-Anfal* (spoils of war) *ayah* (verse) sixty, yet its understanding of the *ayah* does not hold up to scrutiny when understanding it in the context of Islamic tradition; (3) jihadis understand and use the meaning of the terms terror, terrorist, and terrorism in the Qur'anic Arabic sense, which is a different than how it is understood in modern standard Arabic (or in English) based on the linguistics of the Arabic roots for the term: *r-h-b*, which provides a level of legitimacy to their arguments; and (4) jihadis in most cases use the terms in a political rather than religious manner even if jihadis are attempting to make it appear that they have religious sanction and legitimacy to act out using terroristic types of behavior.

In 2002, Michael Vlahos of Johns Hopkins University stated: "What they [jihadis] think about themselves matters much more than what we think about them. Calling them terrorists satisfies our own needs but it does nothing to advance our understanding of them" (Vlahos). Vlahos missed a crucial point, though, which is that jihadis have no issue with being called terrorists since they view it as a badge of honor since they believe it has a positive meaning based on early Islamic tradition. It also shows a lack of understanding of the jihadi movement, epitomizing research on al-Qa'ida and like-minded groups over the past ten

³ For a more in depth look at El-Ansary's discussion on the discourse of using *irjaf* instead of *irhab* see: El-Ansary, Waleed. "Revisiting the Qur'anic Basis for the Use of War Language." *Crescent and Dove: Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam*. Ed. Qamar-Ul Huda. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2010. 63-71.

years. Although in many cases jihadis abuse Islam and twist elements of the tradition and decontextualize many aspects of it, there are still facets of jihadi thought that are based in Islamic tradition – or at least that they use to justify a certain idea or action as shown above by the case of the terms with the root *r-h-b* in classical Arabic.

As such, it would be worthwhile for future research to examine the sources that al-Qa'ida and similar groups use from the Qur'an, *ahadith* (sayings and actions of the Muslim prophet Muhammad), classical and medieval Islamic sources, and stories from the early Islamic tradition to try to contextualize those sources to better understand how jihadis use religion in their propaganda. It is a potentially fruitful area of study since it not only bridges the gap between classical Islamic studies and contemporary thought, but hopefully could shed light on an understudied area of jihadi intellectual thought. It also may have important repercussions for policy makers when they try to understand how the jihadi narrative may sway individuals. It would also be valuable in the future for researchers to analyze how other terrorist groups and movements understand these terms and determine if there is some type of jihadi exceptionalism or if others also try to frame their activities in a more positive light, too.

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