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FROM CRISIS TO CRISIS: CHOICE AND DECISION MAKING IN VIOLENT JIHADISM

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ABSTRACT

The intensification of radicalism poses a threat to not only the international order, but can also disrupt the lives of a small island nation. The increasing radicalism and extremism, leading to a mounting number of people joining Jihadist networks and causing terror have never been so alarming. Beginning with an examination of the roots and trends of violent extremism in the Maldives, the paper traces reasons, ideologies and motivations that lie behind individual and social aspects of choice and decision making in violent Jihadism. In contrast to the dominant view that committing to Jihadism is due to an unconscious decision affected by indoctrination, the paper argues that Jihadism is a bounded rational decision followed by a suboptimal choice. In this decision and choice making, social and individual circumstances become a catalyst for the ideas of radicalism. The paper explores concepts, suggesting a composite theoretical model that signifies the cyclical relationship between rehabilitation, repeated offence and radical transformation. The significance of upheavals, coping mechanisms and reintegration to the society then lies in an unintended consequence of acquiring bounded information, driven by a subterfuge image and persona influence fuelled radical transformation. The paper highlights common misinterpretations used in defining Jihadism and the significance of systematic failure in addressing rehabilitation and reintegration issues in the society, shaping the current trajectory of the threat.

Key words: Jihadism, terrorism, violent, extremism, radicalism, Salafism, Islamism, fundamentalism

1. INTRODUCTION

The Maldives is a country in South Asia, situated in a South South-west direction from India and is one of the most geographically disparate countries in the world. The unique geography of the Maldives, the relative smallness of individual islands and the recent transition to democracy are particularly important factors to consider in any contemporary study in the country. There are 298,968 Maldivians living in 19 atolls in the Maldives (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

In socio-cultural perspectives, the most significant episode in history is the advent of Islam in the year 1153, which shaped socio-cultural practices of Maldives according to Islamic doctrine. However, with the country's unique culture influenced by Buddhism and habits unique to small island life, the adaptation was rather distinctive. Owing to the scattered nature of the islands, relative smallness, limited population, and poor inter-island and outside communication, these islands have been mainly isolated from each other and the rest of the world, necessitating the creation of highly exclusive, extremely close-knit communities with strong kinship ties.

Although everyone adhered to five tenets of Islam, religion was far from being an opiate that drives day-to-day mundane. According to Maldives Democracy Network 'Maldivians took it for granted they are born Muslims without feeling a constant need to prove the degree of their 'Muslimness' to each other or visitors and observers from the outside. A person's faith was for God to know and judge, not for the world to examine and admire or criticise' (Maldives Democracy Network, 2015). This context was prevalent until the late 20th century.

The significant amount of human rights violation, particularly political violence fuelled with religious rhetoric challenging the core values of democracy has been the norm in the country. According to World Bank's statistics on political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, 2017 recorded 0.264 NA. This record was a decrease from the previous number of 0.421 NA for 2016. The data reached an all-time high of 1.179 NA in 2000 and a record low of -0.361 NA in 2012 (CEIC, 2020). Furthermore, the rapid influx of population from outer islands to the capital, followed by congestion, gang culture, drug abuse, uneven distribution of employment, education and health opportunities has led to a rural-urban gap and an unresolved societal ill. The Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2019 showed that the 49 percent of the total population lives in Male', while the remaining 51 percent lives in the rest of the country. The statistics also show that the unemployment rate in Male' is 6.1 percent, while 4.1 percent of unemployment rate being observed in the outer atolls. Furthermore, the statistics also show that the average income per household in 2019 for the capital city was twice that of outer islands (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

The core values of the Maldivian society today are described as the core tenets of Islam along with the principles of democracy, freedom and human rights (Constitution of the Republic of Maldives, 2008). However, there has been a distinct socio-economic divide among the privileged and under-privileged, acting as a driver in creating disillusionment among the population. The most recent statistics from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey in the Maldives showed that there is a high degree of income inequality in the country, with only 5 percent share of income in the hand of the poorest 20 percent (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

2. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this paper is to explore the causality of the choice and decision making in committing to violent Jihadism. The main objectives are to find the individual and social reasons that affect the decision making of violent Jihadists in the following dimensions (a) Individual and socio-economic causes, reasons, ideologies and motivations (b) information and influence network as a modus operandi for recruitment. In understanding information and influence network of modus operandi for recruitment, particular emphasis is drawn to process of who, why, how, what, when and where.

Few of the research that has been conducted on the topic has been concentrated on terrorism as a whole and is usually done to profile members who belong to militia groups in the countries where Jihadist groups are based. It is also important to note here that the emphasis on micro-level data on the process of recruitment will enrich the discourse. The turning point of committing to violent Jihadism and the communication techniques utilised by recruiters need to be understood.

3. METHODOLOGY

At the national level, combating terrorism and addressing radicalisation and violent extremism has brought the notion of Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) under the broad heading of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) (Stephens, Sieckelinck, & Hans, 2019). Many of these terms are used interchangeably. Therefore it is important to discuss the body of literature addressing the matter. There are various frameworks and perspectives on prevention, providing a multifaceted approach. The psychological approaches have aligned with individual-level analysis, while social work has aligned to societal-level factors. Therefore, the methodology on investigating the factors associated with recruitment, conversion and belongingness had a broad range of papers taken for analytical review.

Papers were reviewed, drawing on papers from disciplines that addressed research on extremism, radicalism, Salafism, terrorism and Islamism. The papers were read in-depth and key themes or concept were noted for each paper. Based on the analysis, four recurring themes emerged that cut across the literature (1) the individual factors (2) the social factors (3) information and influence network and (4) modus operandi for recruitment. Each of these themes captures recurring ideas that emerge across the disciplines, which are articulated in a variety of ways but shared underlying perspectives on what is required to understand the cyclic process of rehabilitation, repeated offenders and radicalism.

4. ESTABLISHMENT AND WAVES OF VIOLENT JIHADI MOVEMENTS

Global violent Jihadi movements have been experiencing a series of success and failures since the times of Kharijites. To understand the contemporary back and forth movements, the establishment of Al Qaida in 1988 will be used as a starting point. Since then, there have been several notable movements. The first wave picked up momentum in the 1990s when those who fought in Afghanistan against Soviet occupations returned to their homelands and started attacking regimes that they considered are un-Islamic. Significant attacks against

western countries and far enemies resulted in deadly attacks and violent confrontations crested with the September 2001 attacks. However, the momentum was not upheld, and was followed by a reversed wave where its leaders and followers were capsized and killed.

It was during the second wave that the movement further consolidated its presence. The second wave began around 2003 after the US invasion of Iraq, followed by Al Qaida exploiting the situation of a sectarian war between Sunni and Shia followed. However, the second wave was characterised by large scale attacks across Iraq, Casablanca, Madrid, London and in other countries. A reverse wave followed in 2006 when Al Qaida in Iraq was severely weakened, and the united front force of Britain and US plotted and killed Senior Al Qaida operatives in Pakistan.

A third wave raised between 2007 and 2009 following the rise of Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula but was reversed in 2011, followed by the death of Osama bin Laden and senior officials. According to Jones (2014), there was a 58% increase in the number of Salafists Jihadist groups from 2010 to 2013. The number of Salafi Jihadists more than doubled from 2010 to 2013. He further stated that the war in Syria is the single most important attraction for the militia groups.

The unstable political and economic conditions in Iraq and Syria provided a battleground for those Jihadi leaders who have been looking up to increase their followers. Between 2011 and 2019, the movement was intensified. However, in early 2019, their stronghold in Syria weakened, and many other such missionaries spread to other parts of the world including Africa and Western societies, as demonstrated by attacks in Paris, Brussels and San Bernardino.

In October 2019, the media reported that the leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr Al Bagdadi died in a remote hamlet in the northwest of Syria. He was replaced by a new leader soon afterwards. According to the Guardian, 'ISIS capacity to launch spectacular terror attacks in Europe and beyond is thought to have been diminished by the gruelling war that drastically eroded its ranks and leadership' (Chulov, 2019). On January 2020, a report by the UN Security Council based on intelligence from member states described that the group has been increasing their presence in Iraq and Syria. According to the report, the ISIS has significant setbacks in the recent past. However, they are still well funded and is still a considerable threat worldwide; in Iraq, the group continues to finance its operations by investing in legitimate business and commercial fronts, and in Syria it has resumed extortion operations during daylight hours, aiding them to cover their running costs and allow pensions to be paid to widows or orphans of dead fighters. It was reported on media that during March 2020, many fighters fled from the detention centres and camps in Syria. This may somewhat weaken them as a group. However, the issue of 'homegrown terrorists' remains a significant threat worldwide.

5. ROOTS, TRENDS AND PERCEPTION OF EXTREMISM IN THE MALDIVES

A cultural analyst of the Maldives, Romeo Frias tends to suggest that the Maldivian society was deliberately radicalised by local scholars educated in Arab countries (Xavier-Romero, 2012). The radicalisation movement has been recent and alarmingly fast in speeding up. In the last decade, Maldives has undergone a religious revival led by Salafist, Wahhabists and other strands often described as fundamentalists. It has rooted to the extent that any Muslim who advocates secularism is often labelled as a part of the western conspiracy.

Traditionally a Sunni and moderate society has increasingly been radicalised. Preachers have been advocating a more radical version of Islam in the outer islands. Maldivians have been seeking ideological and operational inspiration from regional radical entities as far back as the 1990s. More than dozens of youth, who had attended an educational institution in Pakistan operated by Jamiat-ul-salfiya, had been indoctrinated. Upon their return, some of these students were arrested and banished to remote islands, where they continued to preach their messages (Amir, 2011). The Maldivian youth who attended Islamic educational institutions in Pakistan were not only engaged in getting Islamic education. The later 1980s was the heyday of the Afghani war against the Soviets and many Maldivian youths who were studying in seminaries across Pakistan travelled to various jihadi training camps in Afghanistan, Pakistan border area (Swami, 2007). Then President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's (an Al Azhar graduate) was strongly influenced by both the teaching of Syed Kutb and Baathist philosophy. In a study about growing extremism in the Maldives, Hafeez stated that 'the president promoted himself as the guardian of Islam and under article 38 of the constitution, while he is also the supreme propagator of Islam. Soon after becoming the president, he opened Islamic school, Mauhad and Arabiya, A branch of Rabitat-al-alam-al-Islamia, an organisation based in Saudi Arabia that coordinated the efforts of Islamic preachers all over the world' (Hafeez, 2014). At the sametime, the Islamic Call Society (Jama'athul Dhauvathul Islamiyya) funded by Libya was operating in the Maldives.

It is also believed that Arab donors are exploiting the ideas and cash in an attempt to undermine the Maldives's traditionally tolerant and inclusive Sunni Islam. In December 1999, Islamists launched attacks against the regime, arguing that millennium celebrations were part of a plot to spread Christianity. Concern over the growth of Islamic extremism in the Maldives began in 2002 when a 28-year-old, Ibrahim fauzee was

arrested in Karachi for having links with Al Qaida and was taken to Guantanamo Bay. In 2003, some posters praising Osama Bin Laden appeared on the walls of the Eydhafushi (central atoll) School. In 2006, Maldivian then foreign minister Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, admitted that Maldivian government is concerned of Islamic fundamentalism spreading. By mid-2006, Islamists succeeded in establishing a base in Himandhoo (north central atoll), has been issuing death threats to locals who do not collaborate with them. In February 2007, the media reported that religious conservatives in Himandhoo banned kids from going to school because of impure foreign teachers, the English language and non-Islamic subjects, set up their own school to teach only Hadith and Quran. The problem in Himandhoo started in October 2006 over a disagreement where the government built a mosque on a former cemetery, as a result, resident set up their own mosque 'Dar-ul-Khair'. The mosque was demolished by the government which further added tension. The mosque was rebuilt, and when the police arrived to resolve the conflict, they were faced with a completely masked and red helmeted man carrying wooden batons which gave the impression of an organised militia. On 9th October 2006, after a violent confrontation and with the aid of the military, the group surrendered, however, led to casualties from both sides.

On 11th November 2007, police alleged 10 men linked in the Male' explosion were absconding in Pakistan where they learnt bomb-making in Madrassas. Dr Rohan Gunaratne, an Al Qaida expert in Singapore Nanyang Technological University was appointed by the government as a counter-terrorism advisor. He said that 'there is still time to implement a strategy that places community engagement and rehabilitation to combat terrorism if the image of an Asian Paradise is to last forever.' However, the steps taken to counter the situation in the Maldives were not internalised in the citizens, forcing one's own ideas on other people bringing more confusion which resulted in more resentment. Socio-economic conditions also seemed to tack aback society. The subsequent administrations of the Maldives are blamed for failing to share the income generated through tourism industry with the majority of the population while the elite class allies became rich which encourage more people to turn against the governments. The state pushed forward a modern and moderate interpretation and held tight control over the Islamic Ulema and clerics. The lines between religious oppositions and political oppression were often blurred with the help of government-controlled media and religion often used by the regime to manipulate to ensure civil order. With the promulgation of political parties in 2005, Islamic political activism was introduced. Any person that opposed Gayoom were automatically deemed heretics, deviants or at its best 'enemies of Islam' (Amir, 2011). According to the Maldives Democracy Network, the textbooks starting from Grade One to Grade Three contain the bulk of instilling a love for Islam, with Islamic values that can be viewed as universal. The textbooks for these grades rarely incite hatred through xenophobic narratives, containing mostly normative values with regard to each chapter. However, from Grade Four onwards, the xenophobic material gradually increases to the point where the radical outweighs the moderate (Maldives Democracy Network, 2015).

With the introduction of multi-party system in the Maldives, the Adhaalath Party with their core values defined in fundamentalism was registered as a political party in 2005. In 2009, Jamiat-ul-Salaf and the Islamic foundation of Maldives were established. Both groups seem to be non-violent and mainstreamed social movements that push the agenda through Islam. Both IFM and Jamiat-ul-Salaf are comprised of learned scholars as well as grass-root activists, follow the Wahabbi slant in ideology and the scholars of these organisations portray a decidedly Arabic persona, with the adoption of Arabic names (containing bin and aby) and a quixotic mix of Arabian/Pakistan and Afghanistan dress, which stands in sharp contrast which was particularly alien to the Maldivian society. Prior to the SAARC Summit held in the Maldives, a monument depicting symbol of Sri Lanka was destroyed by a group of people, who alleged it as having worship idols in the country. Furthermore, another attempt also destroyed coral and sandstone Buddhist idols that dated from the period before Islam came to the islands. The incident took place on the same day then-president was forced to step down, following the strike's slogan- 'my religion, my nation', directly and indirectly supported Adhaalath and Salafi's who then supported the government which came to the power by coup d'etat. . In the same year, an MP, Dr Afrasheem Ali, who was commonly known as a moderate Muslim scholar was murdered. The inquiry commission set up by the current administration in 2019 revealed that he was murdered by local extremists. Between the year 2013 and 2018, there were two notable attacks fuelled by extremists. Ahmed Rilwan, a journalist who had criticised Islamist gangs and exposed government corruption, was abducted in the year 2014. A blogger, Yameen Rasheed was also stabbed to death in April 2017. The inquiry commission revealed that extremist Islamist gangs had carried out these attacks, and they had their connections with police and the court to have the case settled as favourable to them.

During the years, a number of tourists have been attacked by Islamic radicals. In the year 2019, a Turkish tourist was stabbed. Furthermore, in the year 2019, the Commissioner of Police revealed that there was an attempt to detonate an aerial bomb in the Maldives, supported by the IS through a Maldivian based in Syria (Mohamed, 2019). An investigation on the attacks carried out in November 2019 showed the deepness of the root. On November 25th, 2019, the police commissioner posted statistics of religious extremism cases recorded between January 1, 2014, and October 31, 2019. According to statistics, 188 cases related to extremism has

been reported during the period. Furthermore, it was also revealed that there are as many as 1400 Maldivians 'ready-to-kill-for-their-cause'. It was said that out of 173 of the 432 Maldivians who wanted to join the Syrian civil war made it. Out of 173 who went to Syria, 59 remains there. Following this investigation, the authorities have been closely monitoring the dispersed islands and found that several groups did not want to send their children to school and deny their children from vaccination due to their religious beliefs. Furthermore, these groups supported child brides and female genital mutilation in the name of religion. Although the National Counter Terrorism Center was established in the year 2016, its role perceived by the public has been minimal. With the strengthening of the new Anti-Terrorist Law in 2019, it has become more active. Although the government has declared its attempt to rehabilitate and de-radicalise those who have returned to the country, the extent of its effectiveness is yet to be known.

The Asia Times has reported that due to unemployment from the COVID-19, Maldives could soon become more vulnerable than ever to the extremist groups, which was apparent from the attacks on tourists recently (Lintner, 2020). On 4th February 2020, two Chinese and a German tourist was attacked. Muslim militants later took responsibility for this attack. The current administration has admitted that conventional security measures are inadequate in the fight against terrorism, as they do not address the root cause of socio-political causes that nourish extremism; racism, xenophobia and hate speech (Office of the President of Maldives, 2019). According to South Asian Terrorism Portal 'Even though the Maldivian Government has been proactive in dealing with terrorism in recent past, larger complications relating to radicalisation and extremism within the wider society persist due to the use of religion in political mobilisation and the increasing salience of Salafism, replacing traditional religious mores' (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2020).

6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE CYCLICAL PROCESS

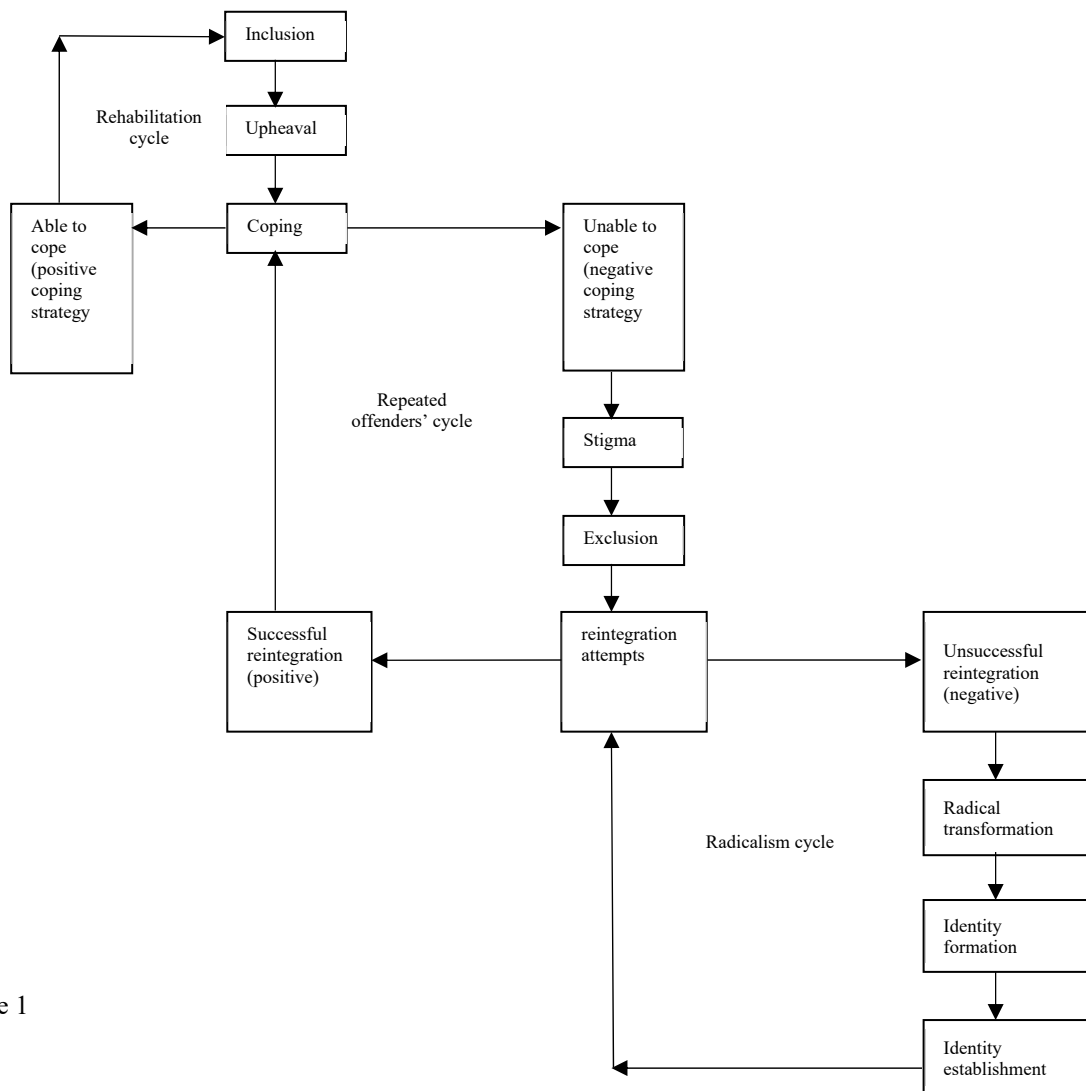


Figure 1

The framework above shows that problems in reintegration to the society after an upheaval or their absence from society which leads to feeling of betrayal by the society and the society. If they are faced with positive coping strategies or a success in reintegration into the society through a successful rehabilitation, they feel accepted by the society as they did prior to the upheaval. However, when faced with adaptation problem, they tend to socialise with people who have commonalities with them (who then turns out to be either repeated offenders) or seek out ways to fill the life gap they have encountered and with the frustration of being trapped between repeated offender groups and wanting to liberate and in this vulnerability falls in the hands of those who seek them to provide the truth of their life in the ways of convincing to act out on Jihad or attain martyrdom status. It is more difficult for them to go back to pre-offender existence due to social stigma. Many tend to seek ways that give them a strong sense of justification and glorification to think of themselves as Martyrdom. Some have sought Jihadism as a way to seek adventure, to prove society otherwise of social stigma's attached to them or to prove their manhood.

7. INTERCHANGEABLE USE OF TERMINOLOGY

In defining Jihadism, it is essential to consider other vocabularies that have been interchangeably used in the context of Jihadism. There are definitions of Jihadism varying from acquiring inner peace to creating pan ideological regimes to confront any of those with an opposing view. Firstly, there is an extensive usage of the concepts associated with Jihadism; such as radicalism, extremism, fundamentalism, Islamism, Salafism and terrorism. However, in most cases, it is a subjective meaning that varies throughout the world and the concepts used interchangeably based on the circumstance used for portrayal.

According to the Maldives Democracy Network, 'radicalisation is a process that includes both the acceptance of political ideas diametrically opposed to a society's core values and the methods by which those who adopt such ideas seek to realise their political aims; individuals who support Jihad, who have chosen to join Jihad and who are seen to undergo a process of accepting beliefs that are diametrically opposed to the core values' (Maldives Democracy Network, 2015). In this definition, it is essential to note that the term Jihad has been used to explain radicalisation in the stance that anyone who supports Jihadism is a radical, while in elsewhere radicalism is defined as the cause of Jihadism.

Extremism, on the other hand, is often used as a term to describe groups and individuals who are radicalised. According to Bartoli and Coleman, extremism is a complex phenomenon, although its complexity is often hard to see (Coleman & Bartoli, 2015). Most simply, it can be defined as activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a character far removed from the ordinary. In conflict settings, it manifests as a severe form of conflict engagement. However, the labelling of activities, people, and groups as "extremist", and the definition of what is "ordinary" in any setting is always a subjective and political matter. Schmid states that the major difference between a radical and an extremist is that a radical will have a more open mind while an extremist will have a closed mind (Schmid, 2014). Despite the contextual definition, there is a broad agreement that 'radicalisation', or 'becoming extremist' is a process that takes place over time comprising a range of factors (Moghaddam, 2005). However, the important point to note in here is that none of the definitions of extremism is linked with Jihadism or a specific ideology that promotes it. It is comprehensible that at times, extremist attacks have been associated with terrorism. For instance, extremist organisations identified with the belief of Hinduism have allegedly carried out terrorist attacks like 2006 Malegaon blasts, Mecca Masjid bombing (Hyderabad), Samjhauta Express bombings and the Ajmer Sharif dargah blast. Additionally, extremist groups identifying with Islam have allegedly carried out suicide bombing in Paris, Brussels, Charlie Hebdo shooting and Easter Attack in Sri Lanka etc.

One such concept which is interchangeably used as Jihadism is fundamentalism. However, in the academic stance, fundamentalism is often defined as the strict adherence or literal interpretation of scriptures or beliefs (Jones, 2014). In such, if religious elucidations are to be used, strict observance to all the scriptures, including scriptures of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism are to be considered. Schmid states that fundamentalist are fundamentalists in the sense that they believe in the timeless "fundamental" truths of a holy script that is taken literally and seen as a blueprint for the organisation of a society pleasing to God (Schmid, 2014). Literalist fundamentalism exists in various religions; it can also be found among Christians, Hindus and Jews. Leeming described that 'to the extent that the [Christian] religion has insisted over the centuries that its way is the only true way and/or that its myths are literally true, it has developed a militancy and a tendency toward fundamentalism' (Leeming, 2014). The underlying factor here is that when the literal meaning of Jihadism is taken from the scriptures to justify its objective, it becomes a fundamentalist notion. For instance, Anderson and Janet states that from its earliest inception, Jihad has been central to the thought and writings of Muslim theologians and jurists (Anderson & Janet, 2005). However, according to Batley the problem has been when the jurists, military officers and radical groups have used Prophet Mohamed's seventh-century

justifications for warfare in a vastly different modern setting to justify their own armed struggle with the assistance of literal interpretations (Batley, 2015).

Tahir (2012) identifies Jihad as a doctrine belonging to a practical portion of the religion, that is however, misinterpreted by exploiters of the religion for vested interests. In Islam, Jihad is of two kinds;

- (a) Greater Jihad; In Islam, a fight against mean desires is known as a greater Jihad (Mutahri, 1406:6). It is also recognised as Jihad bin-nafs. Struggle against inner self or ambitions, desires and lust (inner enemy) are more difficult than the war against an external enemy. Hence that is known as greater Jihad.
- (b) Lesser Jihad; A war against an external enemy with arms in a battlefield is identified as lesser Jihad (Tahir, 2012).

Nomani illustrates non-violent Jihadism as finding one's essence and helping others to reach their essence (Nomani, 2010). However, in the definitions which define violent Jihadism as a central concept of Islam, Javed states that there is consensus among Islamic scholars that the concept of Jihad will always include armed struggle against wrongdoers (Javed, 2001). Furthermore, Bernard states that according to many of the orientalist, there is an overwhelming majority of classical theologians, jurists, and specialists in the hadith that 'understood the obligation of jihad in a military sense' (Bernard, 1991). Therefore, it is commonly understood that among the scholars, there are debates over the meaning and usage of the concept. In this standpoint, the distinction between violent Jihad and non-violent Jihadism is necessary.

Schmid defines Islamists as people who believe that Islam must inform every dimension of human existence, including politics and law, for whom we no longer refer to as fundamentalists or extremists but rather Islamists (Schmid, 2014). As suggested, Islamists believe that adherence to sharia law is considered mandatory and religion needs to be at the core of the politics. It is often viewed as anti-moderate, anti-secular and anti-western. However, it is important to note in here that the definition of Islam vastly varies to that of the notion of Islamism. Salafism, on the other hand, is defined as a Sunni Islamic movement which has different strands of its own, including Wahhabism, the official option of Islam in Saudi Arabia. There are ideological differences even among Salafists. However, it is commonly agreed Salafi Jihadists support Salafism and violent Jihadism. While other sects including non-Wahhabi and non-Salafi Muslims also support violence against infidels, Salafi jihadists view violent Jihad as a duty for Muslim. Also, Salafi doctrines often reject man-made laws and democracy. According to Jones, strict adherence to Sharia', willingness to participate in political movements, ideology in political affiliation differs variously among Salafists (Jones, 2014). Furthermore, the extent and the scope of defining Jihadism varies among Salafists as to whether Jihadist movement of participation has to take place near to one's home or in foreign countries. Another ideological variation is in geographic scope and idea of expansion of pan Islamic caliphate.

In contemporary studies, the most extreme form of violence has been labelled as terrorism. The US State Department defines terrorism in Title 22 of the US Code, Chapter 38, Section 2656f(d)(2): 'Premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents'. Furthermore, Schmid defines terrorism as 'Terrorism refers, on the one hand, to a doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties' (Schmid, 2014). Given many other standard definitions, it is generally understood that none of the definitions of terrorism accounts to any religion in that sort. Based on this definition, an act of terror can be accounted for as terrorist attacks without classifying the religion or the ideology associated with the activity of terror. However, because the terrorist depicts violence against civilians in the name of Jihad to create a biased impression using selectively extract and literal interpretations from the scriptures, Jihad is often viewed as a terrorist attack without considering the distinction between violent and non-violent Jihad. Furthermore, Begum states that since 2001, the United States press has referenced Jihad between approximately 6,000 and nearly 12,000 times per year; television and radio programs mention Jihad an average of 6,000 times per year. In contrast to the way the United States media has publicised violent Jihad while internal Jihad has been largely ignored, with a mere 56 combined total references from 2001 to 2014. The media referenced both internal and violent Jihad a total of 55 times in the aggregation of those same years (Begum, 2018).

Therefore, it is important to note that the concept of Jihadism has been evolved in history and ideology. Furthermore, it is also important to note that Jihadism and other related terminologies are often misinterpreted to have been interchangeably used in a variety of selected settings. By focusing on a narrow definition or a contextualised meaning, the root causes of violence is unaddressed, creating a biased consciousness that contributes to negativity in the perception of other ideologies. Notably, not every Jihad is terrorism; neither every terrorist attack is a jihad.

8. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: REHABILITATION CYCLE

As given in the conceptual framework, the first cyclical process is the rehabilitation cycle. This is the cycle where the individual will feel that they belong to the community. And if the individual may face an individual or social upheaval and they find a positive coping strategy to cope with the situation, they will be integrated into the society through the rehabilitation mechanisms, where they will resort to feel inclusivity and belongingness in the community. The most common individual and social upheavals are explained below.

Studies give evidence that most of the recruits generally face a personal crisis before recruitment and appear to have been noticeably more religious before the turning point. According to Quitan Wiktorowicz, it is a 'crisis that produces cognitive opening... that shakes previously accepted beliefs and renders individuals more receptive to possible alternative perspectives. These factors may include a financial (sudden unemployment or no possibility of social mobility), socio-cultural (humiliations, racism, cultural weakness), political (marginalisation, torture, discrimination, corruption) or personal (death or family-tragedy, a victim of criminal activity) crisis' (Wiktorowicz, 2005). In addition it is also seen that many chose the path of radical Jihadism due to a sudden Islamic awakening. Maldives has a high unemployment rate, fuelled by an increasing number of foreign labourers, which results in challenges to seek for desired jobs. According to the Youth Vulnerability Assessment of the Maldives, lack of career guidance, lack of inculcation to create an entrepreneurial mindset in the people and difficulty in getting bank loans makes it harder for youth to create a stable living (National Counter Terrorism Centre, 2019). The Rapid Assessment conducted by the UNDP in 2003 found out that the drug users attributed their reason for substance abuse as having family problems, experimentation, peer pressure, lack of awareness, psychological problems, easy availability of drugs, lack of educational and employment opportunities, boredom and stress (UNDP, 2003). It was also found out that over 91 percent of the substance abusers did not have the desired level of education, and they were living with their families, usually between age 16 to 30 years.

Most research has shown that structural factors such as economics or education show a little effect when measured at the country level. Indeed, there is evidence of higher levels of education among extremists. What seems to be more important are issues of identity, fairness, exclusion and disenchantment. It is also evident that social, political and religious grievances can also be perceived as necessary to opt to make the decision. German Sociologist Max Weber defined the state as 'a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory'. When state institutions are weak, opportunist elements in societies are able to take advantage. State weakness are particularly likely in remote areas, where insurgent and terrorist groups can establish rural strongholds. The more extreme that decline or absence of authority in the region, the more the population becomes 'virgin territory' for those who would become an alternative government. Weak governance fuels alternative power centres, and warlords often flourish. Poor governance also increases the likelihood of insurgency and terrorism because the states security forces are weak and lack popular legitimacy. These forces may be badly financed and equipped, organizationally inept, corrupt, politically divided and poorly informed about events at the local level (Jones, 2014).

In the context of the Maldives, according to the National Counter Terrorism Centre, many are saddened by high levels of corruptions, jobs getting into the hands of those who have connections rather than qualified. Many have identified that political patronage is the norm in the country. Furthermore, they also stated that only 35 percent of the young people interviewed said the country is heading in the right direction. Just under 50 percent felt the government cared for them. The assessment also showed that over 88 percent of the respondents felt that the administration was centralised and that government should spend more on outer islands. The assessment concluded that out of 173 people who completed the survey, they found corruption, education, drugs, unemployment, housing, gangs and violent Jihad as the seven most alarming issues for them, in that order (National Counter Terrorism Centre, 2019). According to the Country Diagnostic Study conducted by the Asian Development Bank in the Maldives in the year 2015, Maldives has a relatively high-income inequality by sub-regional standards, although the country has the highest per capita income in the region. As discussed in the conceptual framework, the choice and decision of joining violent jihadist movements is proved to be a rational choice. In this rational choice, the individuals or groups are often faced by resentment. The associated stigma's or their captivating socio-economic situations, whether it be problems within the family or inability to see them as part of the wider community results in bitterness. According to Coleman and Bartoli (2015), extremism is a rational strategy in a game over power in which their extremist actions are an affecting strategy for gaining and maintaining power in a hierarchical environment where resources are scarce and competition for power is paramount for meeting one's needs. This is in line with the discussions proposed in the Youth Vulnerability Assessment Report, where youngsters have stated that they feel that everything is the society is a competition and that there is nothing to do if they fail, more so, if they fail repeatedly. With such dire conditions of administrative instability, many tend to lose their faith and hope in the government to resolve their socio-economic problems.

According to the Youth Vulnerability Assessment of the Maldives, 69 percent of the respondents felt that social isolation was a serious problem for young people. Many of the young people felt that they were excluded from decision making. Furthermore, the report also highlighted that family breakdown, crime, political polarisation and drugs have all contributed to the feeling of self-isolation among youth. According to Bjelopera, there is a general four-step process of radicalisation leading to violent extremism. First, individuals exist in a pre-radicalised phase in which they lead lives unaware of or uninterested in violent Jihad or fundamental Salafism. Next, they go through self-identification in which some sort of crisis or trigger (job loss, social alienation, death of a family member, international conflict) urge them to explore Salafism. Third, individuals undergo indoctrination or adoption of jihadist ideas combined with Salafi views 'a spiritual sanctioner or a charismatic leader' plays the role of indoctrination. Finally, radicalising individuals go through 'jihadisation' where they identify themselves as violent jihadists (Bjelopera, 2013). To find legitimisation and justification for the chosen path, some go back to their childhoods, their family ties, their upbringing, their social setting and their encounter with religion.

9. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: REPEATED OFFENDERS' CYCLE

The repeated offender's cycle is when the individual is faced with a social or individual disturbance, they may be involved in an offence. To overcome then offense, they will either have to go through a positive coping strategy or a negative coping strategy. While the positive coping strategies helps them to overcome their difficulties and integrates into the society, the negative coping strategy results in a social stigma, followed by exclusion from the community. Once they excluded from the community, some may continue to reattempt reintegration into the society and few may succeed. However, among those who fails to succeed, they are either stuck in the repeated offender's cycle or they are transformed to radicals. In communities where rehabilitation system has failed, it is inevitable that the offenders chose to find other avenues to find their self.

According to Bartoli and Coleman (2015), extremism is an emotional outlet which is a persistent experience of oppression, insecurity, humiliation, resentment, loss and rage leading individuals and groups to adopt conflict engagement strategies which 'fit' or feel consistent with their experiences. Research indicates that recruits usually come from religiously moderate middle-class families, married with children. Most importantly, they also have some level of education, but are usually unemployed and appears to be socially and religiously alienated and frustrated before joining into the militia. In the context where the recruits are well-off, they have either been previously associated with illicit criminal activities or highly dependent on fortunate parents for their wellbeing. In the Youth Vulnerability Assessment of the Maldives, the National Counter Terrorism Centre of the Maldives has stated that 'we do not have biographies of all those who have left the Maldives. But from what we do know, a significant number were drug users, former prisoners, or people from troubled families (National Counter Terrorism Centre, 2019). This has been a similar pattern across many countries'. Furthermore, the report has also highlighted that almost all of those who have gone to Syria and Iraq are believed to have had some encounters with the justice sector or prison service. The report on the National Drug Use Survey of the Maldives, found out that approximately 61 percent of drug users from Male' and 79 percent of drug users from outer atolls have been arrested at least once in their lifetime, indicating lack of health and social welfare systems in the country (UNODC, 2013). The study also revealed that many of them were diagnosed with a psychological disorder.

Mortimo and Stimson on their study of process and systems evaluation of drug treatment and rehabilitation services in the Maldives, identified that there could be an estimate of 10,000 to 30,000 young people who uses drugs in the country (Mortimore & Stimson, 2010). According to the World Youth Report, people use substances to satisfy a need or to serve a function (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018). This indicates the rationality of the decision that they make. The Youth Vulnerability Assessment of the Maldives found out that many young people believe that there is a lot of stigmas attached even if you are clean and that there is lack of understanding within the community to accept them (National Counter Terrorism Centre, 2019). It is so common that there is at least a one-heroin user in every household. Eighty percent of those incarcerated in prison are on drug charges, and over 70 percent are repeat offenders. In terms of rehabilitation, there is only a one main rehabilitation centre in the country, with two smaller ones in the outer islands. It is a common conception that almost everyone who comes from the rehabilitation process relapses due to the ineffectiveness of the system and process. The National Drug Use Survey conducted by the UNODC in the year 2012 found out that only 4 percent of current drug users in Male' were admitted at the rehabilitation centre. There is a huge shortfall in terms of capacity and quality of the treatment programmes (UNODC, 2013).

Naaz stated that there are ten drivers for radicalisation; (1) dynamic socio-political environment, (2) limited economic opportunity and youth voluntary unemployment, (3) limited opportunity for desired higher education, (4) increase in mental health and substance abuse problems, (5) increased youth with criminal history and gang-related violence, (6) disconnectedness with family and community, (7) geographical isolation,

(8) disenfranchisement, loss of hope, meaninglessness, (9) lack of encouragement from families and communities to seek a new opportunity, and (10) increase exposure and interaction with social networks promoting radicalisation (Naaz, 2018). It is universal that politicians and business figures capitalise on gangs. Social research shows that gangs provide an identity, protection, income, support and acceptance among their groups, therefore those whose education does little to prepare them for a living, resort to these means. Participation in gang activities are common among those difficult family environments, poverty, inadequate housing, violence and unemployment. Naaz found out that 54.2 percent of members in violent gangs reported abusing drugs, while 44 percent are engaged in the sale of illicit drugs. According to her study, a typical gang profile would have unemployed, use or sell drugs, earn approximately 600usd, has been detained by police and has a criminal record (Naaz, 2018). When other means are a constraint, some are willing to risk to earn money through illegal means. Moreover, this is often assisted by businessmen and politicians, utilising them for their gain, in return for protecting them from official authorities.

10. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: RADICALISM CYCLE

The radicalism cycle is when the individual fails to integrate into the society after an upheaval, and several attempts, they transform themselves into radicals, where they create a new identity and establish their identity through the support of the like-minded. Nesser and Stenersen offer the distinction of four types of terrorist profiles in a typical Jihadist cell; (a) entrepreneur (b) his prote'ge' (c) the misfits and (d) the drifters (Bokhari, Hegghammer, Lia, Nesser, & Tonneson, 2006). The choice and decision making in Jihadism can be classified into social and non-social fields. According to Bartoli and Coleman, extremists are grown in adverse conditions (poverty, inadequate access to healthcare, nutrition, education and employment), a denial of basic human needs (for security, dignity, group identity and political participation), the unending experience of humiliation, and an ever-widening gap between what people believe they deserve and what they can attain lead to extremists (Coleman & Bartoli, 2015). This is particularly so because channels for getting needs met are experienced as blocked. They further argued that extremists are constructed, meaning political leaders capitalise on adverse conditions, incentivising extremism (such as offering monetary awards to families or emphasising benefits to 'martyrs' in the afterlife). Furthermore, they legitimise militantism in order to draw attention to their cause and gain power. This gives evidence to the rationality of the decision that they make to transform themselves, and associate themselves with violent Jihadists. This may not be the optimal choice, however, this becomes the sub-optimal choice for them.

Similar to the personal presentation of gangster-rappers, the Jihadi is exposing that he 'is somebody'. A social status that might look very appealing to 'insecure', 'naïve' adolescents, in search of status and respect. Moreover because 'fighting' Jihad is simply seen by the teenager-respondents as 'us against anybody who is mistreating the brotherhood', it is arguable that the presentation of the Jihad lifestyle is promoting gang affiliation and/or communicates interest in gang activity. Prison has been overcrowded, and there is no segregation in terms of the type of offenders or their severity. 'Those who have been jailed say that little is offered to them and that most of the time the only reading material allowed is the Koran. Anecdotal evidence suggests that prison has been one of the routes to extremism and engagement with armed groups in the Middle East' (National Counter Terrorism Centre, 2019).

Within the series of reports, Hussain and Saltman discuss the relationship between the internet and direct Jihadist recruitment stating 'terrorist do not use the internet for direct operational recruitment, but rather to shape a committed virtual radical Islam community from which individuals will be identified as potential candidates for recruitment' (Hussain & Saltman, 2014). Sageman argued that the radicalising factor for the process of joining the network is down to social bonds and networks such as those of friendship and kinship (Sageman, 2008). It is also estimated that most of these recruiters do not join the militia by themselves and often accompanied by family or friends, which leads to the growth of the movements. According to Sageman, there are 'gatekeepers', most commonly someone with Jihad experience or has a connection to the militia groups, so he can provide the youngsters with the information to whom to contact and where to go for training and undergo formal recruitment (Sageman, 2008). According to Naaz, there are four main activities carried out to recruit Maldivians to violent extremism; general religious awareness activities, propagation of violence through non-violent means, violent lines of efforts and terrorism (Naaz, 2018).

In social factors, religious imperatives is one of the critical factors that drive the choice and decision making of the Jihadists. For instance, the founder and the leader of Jaish-e-Mohamed, a militant group based mainly in Pakistan explained Jihadism as the 'luggage of the Mujahid'. Another instance where a former member of Hizb-ul-Mujahidin, a separatist group in Kashmir defines Jihadism as the 'Islam's neglected duty'. Furthermore, one of the dynamic factors in persuading recruits into Jihadism false under the category of injustices committed against Muslims and perceived bias, discrimination and symbol of harassment and insult to their beliefs. It is evident that Salman Rushdie affair, the torture in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, the ban against

wearing hijab in France and prophet Mohamed's cartoon controversy and such other incidents leads revolutionary young Muslim's to turn into Jihadism to fight for what they believe. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) affects how the internet contributes to radicalisation, addressing the diffusion of messages over time and across social networks (both online and offline). The tendency of both online radicalisation and online socialisation plays a vital role. A thorough investigation of the discourse shows that discussion lasts two weeks or less, hence the majority of discussions are new, and that majority of discussions are only of one page. They represent the activity of a small fraction of each forum membership, generate very little response from the rest of the community. Jihadists forums encourage action with 37% of all discussions containing explicit or implicit calls to Jihad. Half of the discussions quote from Islamic scriptures, 38 percent referring to other websites, 29% referring to other religious authorities. Forum discussion participants were exclusively male in 87 percent of discussions and adults in 97 percent discussions. These groups centred around three ideas; ideological foundation, organisational structure and operational means (Erez, Weimann, & Weisburd, 2011).

Many of the recruits believe that western talk of justice, human rights democracy and free speech is biased and does not provide equal opportunities for Muslim's worldwide, which adds to insurmountable chasm between the West and Islamic world. Therefore, westerners are mostly referred to as doing double-talks, caricatures and perpetrators. The overall message of 'holy war' against alleged oppression and the idea that Muslims live in humiliation is confirmed every day on the web. In reaction, the Jihadi is exposing that he is somebody to consider in the struggle; belonging to a group that fights the injustice laid upon them. Through slick images and video's they present themselves as cool, tough, and overall fearless guys, with a purpose in life. Platforms like Facebook, which are all about 'profiling' could be playing an essential role in shaping peoples perceptions of the outside world that can support the development of a distinct individual and collective identity. In the case of Jihadism, this probably leads to interpretations of unity and brotherhood (Weert, 2014). As the literature indicates, the jihadist networks operate through a hierarchy, including leaders and followers. Leaders join the jihadist group out of consciousness through the intellectual process and political grievances and a call for social justice through Al Qaida's doctrine of 'global jihad', where followers tend to join for multiple reasons as discussed above. Early studies focused on the subject indicates that Al Qaida recruitment apparatus and Professional Al Qaida recruiters target mosque environments looking for youngsters to brainwash. However, the current trends seem to be somewhat hidden and virtual. Also, Al Qaida and like-minded groups provide general guidelines for recruitment through the internet and propaganda. Also, some are non-political and non-violent, but fundamentalists who carry out recruitment processes through talk hard but refraining from violence movements.

According to Erez, Weimann and Weisburd, Jihadi websites provide fertile ground for recruiters, while virtual activism in support of global Jihad serves as a kind of entry-level terrorism (Erez, Weimann, & Weisburd, 2011). Despite instability in the Jihadist website, they use the internet, particularly specific forums. These forums provide an avenue for direct communication. Private messaging on the forums is used to discuss matters critical to the organisation or its members, such as how to travel to a land of Jihad and join an active terrorist organisation, initial plotting of real-world terrorist attacks, and as a meeting place for organisation leaders. Intermediaries, social networks, the internet have been cited as playing key roles in the radicalisation process. Intermediaries are charismatic leaders often help persuade to radicalise or even become violent. Beyond the radicalisation experience, the development and strengthening ties with like-minded individuals may play a prominent role in the formation of terrorist groups (Bjelopera, 2013). Although radicalisation processes usually develop gradually over many years, recent experiences in Western countries seem to indicate the opposite. In some cases, youth radicalisation processes are occurring within a very short period. Together with the recent cases of "lone wolf" or "virtual packs of wolfs" violent extremist attacks in the West, this raises the question whether these may be exclusively attributed to the open-access social media outlets. Clearly, persons looking for confirmation of their ideas will find that the internet can function as an echo chamber of their already extremist ideology, but clear evidence that the internet and/or social media are the main drivers of radicalisation is yet to be found. What would happen if we were to take the availability of information on the internet and social media out of the equation? In other words, is the availability of information on the internet the starting place of radicalisation, or do other factors trigger that process, with the internet merely functioning as a catalyst? (Ginkel, 2015). Furthermore, research analysis has already shown that so-called 'Pop-Jihad' is also very adaptive through youth culture media like Youtube video's and Facebook profiles and groups (Weert, 2014).

It is also important to note in here that while this ideology is widely spread, there is little to no effort in providing youngsters with proper education with values. According to the National report on Perceptions of Islam and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the Maldives published in the year 2016, Islam was practiced in moderation in the past, however, at present, there is a growing presence of fundamentalism with the promotion of Jihadist ideologies in the Maldives (SHE, 2016). According to the Youth Vulnerability Assessment of the Maldives, many of the youngsters felt that there is no value education in the Maldives and

that whenever they have questions about religion, there is nobody to answer them (National Counter Terrorism Centre, 2019). Having access to internet and English being the second language in the Maldives, many youngsters then turn to the internet as a source of information and ends up in these forums where they are at the risk of being radicalised.

An important social factor that needs to be considered in recruitment is the jihadist movement that emphasises on the decentralised-individualised Jihad. Current research also gives evidence that recruitment to terrorist cells are more organised and systematic than previously witnessed. It is evident that there is a culture for recruitment inherent. The recruiters seem to possess charismatic personalities and have manipulative skills to carry out propaganda and show videos of oppression of Muslims around the world and referred the recruits to convenient networks by promising them an end to their seek of the 'truth'. More importantly, out of loyalty to the kins and through thought and conscious choice as a reaction to lack of options and unable to cope with social problems are some of the factors that lead to making a choice and decision by the recruits. Wiktorowicz in his study, explains that members of the groups were taught how to recruit new members. They were told to approach so-called religious seekers and initiate discussions about Islam. They were also told to address the concerns of the individuals and to be cautious not to scare them. Subtly, they lured the seekers into accepting the ideology and methodology where they were advised to attend meetings and then come back for discussions (Wiktorowicz, 2005). Nesser and Stenerson stated that there is an existent culture for recruitment, implying horizontal patterns of recruitment. There are hardcore, politically driven, activist, who already have connections with jihadist groups who aggressively reach out to potential recruits through their social network (Bokhari, Hegghammer, Lia, Nesser, & Tonneson, 2006).

11. CONCLUSION

It is understood that very often the concept of Jihadism is misinterpreted by the situation and the circumstance which it portrays, therefore the cause and its impact goes unaddressed. When discussing about the choice and decision making in violent Jihadism, the study gives evidence that there are individual and socio-economic conditions which results in a feeling of disturbance among those individuals who confront these situations. However, it is a systematic failure in addressing to this individual and social upheavals that results in the individuals making a rational decision to commit to violent Jihadism. Just like any rational decision, they understand the problem that they face, they identify the decision criteria, they weigh the criteria, they generate a list of alternatives and evaluate them before they determine their decision.

It is understandable that socio-economic and political upheavals are associated with the choice and decision making of the recruits. Therefore, it is vital to antidote socio-economic and political crises that lead to the jihadist movement. The crises allow jihadist networks to justify their answers and it also gives a pathway for the recruits who are frustrated of the society to act out violently and aggressively rather than to seek out constructive and peaceful ways to observe their activism. As the literature supports, the militia groups are led by the leaders who are often educated and carry out networking and team building activities extensively. Therefore, any effort to counter resolve Jihadism needs to start from the grassroot to implement a proper rehabilitation and social welfare mechanism in the country, before focusing on networks that carry out indoctrination and networking.

One of the key challenges in countering jihadist networks is the wide dissemination of information virtually. The information regarding Jihadist movements that is given on the internet are usually biased in nature. However, it is more likely that the trend will expand, and it will provide a platform for discussion and dissemination of the ideology that leads further indoctrination. Therefore, it is vital to create a culture of knowledge seeking among youth, while ensuring safe usage of internet and other information flows. Another important dimension that needs to be addressed for countermeasures is injustice anywhere seems to open doors for the jihadist recruiters to act out and reach to the potential recruits by acting out to seek justice for the symbols and injustices of the suffering of Muslims worldwide. It is crucial that socio-economic condition of the country to be stabilised by political will to create harmony in the society. It is also alarming that the formal education sector in the Maldives is indoctrinating the ideology into young minds. The language used in the books are often incomprehensible, and the ideas prevalent in the books does not instil a love for the religion rather focuses on inciting hatred towards other religions, ideologies and cultures. It is necessary to revise syllabus, textbooks and reading materials to focus on morality and ethics, while also opening the minds of the young. Lack of psychosocial support, counselling and guidance avenues, results in youths' seeking their consensus and self-worth elsewhere which is the sub-optimal choice of being connected to the Jihadi networks promoting to give them an outstanding identity. Lack of psychosocial support and rehabilitation mechanisms has been a never-ending issue in the country. Just as importance is given to development of physical infrastructure, it is equally important to give emphasis on social aspects for the development of the country. This identity creation and establishment results in them proving to commit to the cause that they believe worth

fighting for. In this rational decision making, they are aware of the low probability of making their fight real, but they are convinced of the high pay off once they set out their journey, based on the alternatives that they are presented with. Continuous failure in being accepted into the society and living up to the societal expectations becomes more difficult than committing to violent Jihadism.

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