Jahiliyya, Jihad and the Islamic State: Abul A'la Mawdudi's Impact on Modern Jihadism

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ABSTRACT

Abul A'la Mawdudi is the only Pakistani ideologue to be quoted and read by jihadists on a wide scale. Yet, he is also highly regarded by mainstream Islamists like the Muslim Brotherhood. How could Mawdudi influence the ultra-violent ideology of jihadism, while at the same time being a champion of non-violent Islamic activism? This article compares how Mawdudi's concepts of jahiliyya, jihad, and the Islamic state were operationalized by Islamists in pre-partition India and by jihadists in 1960s Egypt. It argues that jihadists used Mawdudi's writings selectively, and out of their original historical context, to justify contemporary political aims.

Introduction

The modern jihadi movement was born in Asia – yet practically all the 'forefathers' of jihadi ideology hail from the Middle East: Sayyid Qutb from Egypt, Abu Muhammad al-

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Maqdisi from Jordan, and Abdullah Azzam from Palestine.[1] Mawlana Abul A‘la Mawdudi (1903-1979), founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan, is an exception to this trend. Mawdudi is arguably the only Pakistani ideologue to be quoted and read by jihadists on a wide scale.[2] Curiously, his writings are also highly regarded by moderate Islamists. His preferred method was to obtain power through political activism — including the participation in democratic elections. His style of activism thus had more in common with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its founder, Hassan al-Banna, than with al-Qaida.

How and why did Mawdudi influence the ultra-violent ideology of jihadism, while at the same time being a champion of non-violent Islamic activism? This article outlines his thoughts and ideology, concentrating on three concepts that are fundamental for the jihadists, namely *jahiliyya*, jihad, and the Islamic state. The article argues that jihadists have used Mawdudi's writings selectively, and out of their original historical context, to justify contemporary political aims. This was possible because of the ambiguity in Mawdudi's texts, which allowed for different operationalizations depending on the political needs of jihadists and moderate Islamists alike.

Existing Literature and Framework

Several studies exist of Mawdudi's ideology and political thought, written by political scientists, philosophers and anthropologists.[3] They see Mawdudi‘s thought as a product of the specific historic context in which he lived – the most seminal event of which was the partition of British India in

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1 The ‘modern jihadi movement’ is here understood as the brand of militant Islamism promoted by the so-called Afghan-Arabs, i.e. Arab veterans of the Afghan-Soviet war in 1979-89.

2 See, for example, William McCants, ed., *Militant Ideology Atlas* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006), 11.

3 For example, Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi& the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (New York: Oxford, 1996); Roy Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi and political Islam* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011); Irfan Ahmad, “Genealogy of the Islamic State: Reflections on Maududi's Political Thought and Islamism,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15 (2009): S145-S162.

1947 and the rise of Pakistani nationalism. Mawdudi's name has also been mentioned within the more ambiguous field of 'terrorism studies' and here, he is usually described as one of the ideological forefathers of al-Qaida.[4] Such analyses are examples of policy-driven research, where the main aim is to develop policies on how to best counter jihadism and terrorism.

Thus, there are two types of research concerning Mawdudi's intellectual heritage: Those who see his works as a product of a particular historical context (pre- and post-partition of India) and those who see him as one of several Islamic fundamentalists that in the 20th Century inspired and enabled the rise of modern jihadism. What none of these research traditions do however, is to explain the puzzle of how Mawdudi could have such a profound impact on jihadism while at the same time propagating modern ideas about democracy and the state that are indeed unacceptable to these very same jihadists. This constitutes a gap in the current research which is particularly relevant for the policy-driven tradition: Lumping all of al-Qaida's "ideological forefathers" into one category is not very helpful because it potentially alienates large segments of non-violent Muslim activists. Instead, research on al-Qaida's ideology should focus on the many idiosyncrasies contained within this ideology — one of them being jihadists' open embracement of some of Mawdudi's concepts and silent rejection of others.

This paper uses a historical approach to studying how Mawdudi's ideas influenced jihadism. Primacy is not given to studying the theological concepts themselves, but to

4 Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (London: Phoenix, 2002): 143; Philip Jenkins, "Clerical Terror: The Roots of Jihad in India," *The New Republic*, (December 24, 2008); Heather. S. Gregg, "Fighting the Jihad of the Pen: Countering Revolutionary Islam's Ideology," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 2 (2010): 298; Heather S. Gregg, "Fighting Cosmic Warriors: Lessons from the First Seven Years of the Global War on Terror," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no.3 (2009): 192; Amritha Venkatraman, "Religious Basis for Islamic Terrorism: The Quran and Its Interpretations," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30, no.3 (2007): 241.

studying "the political factors and historical context in which philological interpretation is made and unmade."[5] The underlying assumption here is that jihadism, as a modern political ideology, is based on certain interpretations of Mawdudi's texts, rather than the texts themselves. Thus, to understand jihadism it is not enough to study Mawdudian thoughts but one must study the historical contexts in which these thoughts were used to serve the political goals of jihadism.

The analysis part of the paper is divided into three parts, each part corresponding to a major theme in Mawdudi's intellectual heritage: *Jahiliyya*, jihad, and the Islamic State. Each part will give an overview of the Mawdudian principle and then explore how this principle came to be associated with jihadism. But first, an overview of Mawdudi's background and purported links with jihadism is warranted.

Mawdudi's Life and Links with Jihadism

Abul A'la Mawdudi was born in the southern Indian city of Awrangabad, Deccan, in 1903. In his childhood he was mostly home-schooled by his father, a devotee of Islamic mysticism. In 1919 he moved to Delhi and later to Hyderabad, pursuing a career as a journalist, writer and intellectual. His first major work, *Jihad in Islam,* was published as an article series in 1927.[6] Most of his later ideological writings were published in Hyderabad between 1933 and 1941, at the height of the Indian independence movement.[7] It was in this period, in 1939, that he held the speech *Jihad fi Sabil Allah* which was later rendered into a pamphlet widely circulated among jihadists. The pamphlet is known in English as *Jihad in Islam* – the same title as his

5 Ahmad, "Genealogy of the Islamic State," S147.

6 The article series was first published in *al-Jam'iat*, a paper that Mawdudi edited on behalf of Jam'iat-i Ulama-i Hind (Society of the Ulama of India). In 1930 the article series was published as a book entitled *Jihad in Islam.* Nasr, *Mawdudi,* 17, 23.

7 Nasr, *Mawdudi,* 41.

1927 article series.[8] In 1941, Mawdudi founded the political party Jamaat-e-Islami in Lahore, and from then on devoted most of his life to politics. During his life time Mawdudi wrote voluminously on Islamist and Wahabi/Salafist-inspired concepts and authored more than 120 books.

After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Mawdudi moved to Lahore and continued to run the Pakistani branch of Jamaat-e-Islami. He died of natural causes in 1979, shortly after the military coup of General Zia ul-Haq, and the start of Ayatollah Khomeini's ascent to power in the Iranian revolution. Both Zia and Khomeini were influenced by Mawdudi's ideas — General Zia embarked upon an "islamisation campaign" in Pakistan while Khomeini put Mawdudi's ideas of Islamic revolution into practice. At the time of Mawdudi's death however, the modern jihadist movement was still in its infancy. Local jihadi groups started to appear in Egypt and Syria in the 1970s. But jihadism did not become a truly transnational phenomenon until the 1980s war in Afghanistan, which gave rise to the so-called "Afghan-Arabs" movement led by the Palestinian ideologue Abdullah Azzam.

There are two ways in which Mawdudi's heritage is thought to have influenced the modern jihadist movement. The first is through ideological inspiration from Mawdudi's works to contemporary jihadi ideologues such as Sayyid Qutb and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi.[9] The second is through direct links between members of Mawdudi's political party, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), and al-Qaida-affiliated groups in Pakistan. The purported links between JI members and al-Qaida is outside the scope of this paper, but deserve a brief elaboration.

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8 Abul A'la al-Mawdudi, *Jihad in Islam,* transl. to English by Abdul Waheed Khan (Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd., n.d.).

9 John Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism* (London: Hurst & Co, 2010): 158; Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi: The ideology and influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (New York: Cambridge: 2012): 61.

Mawdudi's political party, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) continued to exist after Mawdudi's death in 1979 and is today one of the largest religious parties in Pakistan. Like other Islamist groups in Pakistan in the 1980s, JI was involved in the Afghan-Soviet war, giving support to the Afghan *mujahidin*. In this period links were also established between JI leaders and prominent "Afghan-Arabs," including the Palestinian ideologue Abdullah Azzam, and probably also with Osama bin Laden.

After 2001, when a number of high-ranking al-Qaida members fled to Pakistan, there have been claims of continued links between individual al-Qaida members and JI. The most well-known example is probably the 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM), who was arrested at the house of a JI district leader in Rawalpindi in March 2003.[10] Two JI leaders in Karachi, Akmal and Arshad Waheed, bank-rolled the al-Qaeda-linked group Jundullah before their arrest in 2004.[11] A more recent example is the so-called Hammad Adil cell – a terrorist cell comprising of members of JI's student wing, which was arrested in 2013 in Islamabad and suspected of links with al-Qaida.[12]

Given that JI is a mass movement in Pakistan, it is not surprising that jihadists or their supporters may turn up as former (or even current) JI members. Similarly in Europe, several jihadists have turned out to be former members of Hizbut-Tahrir or other non-violent, but socially conservative movements. In some cases after 2001 there may have been personal links between al-Qaida and JI members. In other cases the exact nature of the links is unclear. In any case, such links are probably more a result of social network dynamics than indicative of an ideological bond between JI

10 Owais Tohid, "Prize Catch", *News Line*, March 2003, http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2003/03/prize-catch, accessed on September 20, 2015.

11 Amir Mir, "Drone deaths underline JI's Jihadi links", *News International*, November 22, 2014, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-34264-Drone-deaths-underline-JIs-Jihadi-links, accessed on September 20, 2015.

12 Farhan Zahid, "The Terrorist Next Door: Pakistan's Hammad Adil", *Militant Leadership Monitor*5, no. 8 (August 2014).

and al-Qaida. JI's mode of activism, which is to take part in democratic elections in Pakistan, is strongly rejected by al-Qaida leaders who believe armed struggle framed as *jihad* is both a legitimate and preferable method for establishing an Islamic State.

Mawdudi's ideological influence on the modern jihadist movement is nevertheless undisputable. This influence happened indirectly — through dissemination of Mawdudi's texts to audiences in the Middle East, and their adaptation of key concepts to new political realities. The next sections of the paper will look at how this happened through looking at the history of three concepts made famous by Mawdudi: *Jahiliyya*, jihad, and the Islamic State.

Theories of *Jahiliyya*

Mawdudi's most important contribution to modern jihadism was his reinvigoration of the concept of *jahiliyya* in the 1930s. *Jahiliyya* can be defined as "Extreme ignorance (jahl) and disbelief in God. Often used to describe the era that preceded the revelation of the Qur'an, and ignorance in general."[13] *Jahiliyya* is not a Qur'anic concept but rather,"… a construct of Islamic thinkers, developed for particular purposes."[14] Mawdudi's innovation was that he applied the *jahiliyya* concept not to pre-Islamic times, but to modern society. Muslims today live in a state of ignorance and must strive to return to the true faith. These ideas were later adopted by Sayyid Qutb, and they form a central thesis in Qutb's jihadist manifesto, *Milestones*, from 1964. Thus, it is easy to conclude that Mawdudi was the 'ideological forefather' of jihadism.

However, there are crucial differences between the two historical contexts in which Mawdudi and Qutb operated. Qutb's writings in the 1960s inspired a violent and

13 Islamic Dictionary, *http://www.islamic-dictionary.com/index.php?word=jahiliyah*, accessed on July 22, 2015.

14 Gerald Hawting, "Pre-Islamic Arabia /The Jahiliyya," *Oxford Bibliographies*, April 14, 2011, *www.oxfordbibliographiesonline.com/view/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0142.xml;jsessionid=D119788709AF17CA6AB918958F5F01CC*, accessed on May 11, 2017.

revolutionary jihadist movement, while Mawdudi's writings in the 1930s did not have the same outcome. On the contrary, it inspired a Islamist political party — the Jamaat-e-Islami — that operated within the framework of the modern Pakistani state. It was not until the 1980s Afghan-USSR war that jihadism as a violent movement became a mass phenomenon in Pakistan. And now, it was not *jahiliyya* that was the main frame of reference, but classical notions of jihad, which will be discussed in the next section.

The concept of *jahiliyya* is indeed an old concept, which has repeatedly been used by Islamist fundamentalists and radicals over the period of last one thousand years (Figure 1).

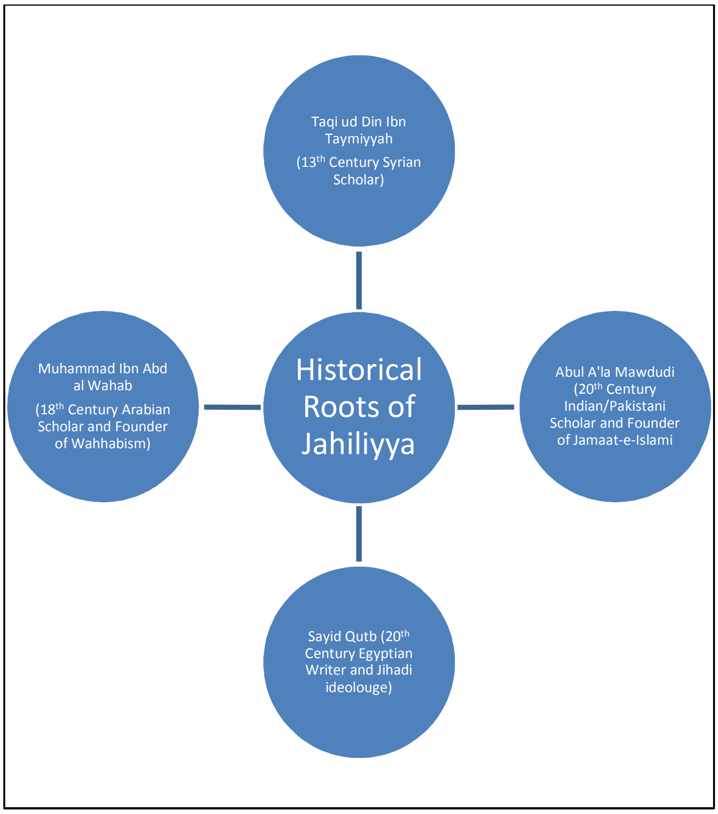

Figure 1: Historical Roots of the Theory of Jahiliyya

Syrian scholar Taqiud-Din Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) used the term while the Egyptian Mamluk Dynasty was at war against Mongols in the 13th Century. Ibn Taymiyyah considered that the Mongol warring tribes were living in a state of ignorance, because of their application of man-made laws instead of Sharia.[15] Thus, fighting a *jihad* against them was obligatory. Ibn Taymiyyah during his lifetime bracketed Sufi and Shia sects of Islam alongside Mongols because of their 'ignorance' of true Islamic values and practices as he accused them of innovations. It is important to note here that the term *jahiliyya* has nothing to do with non-Muslims. It targets only Muslims — those that, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, had fallen victim to pre-Islamic ignorant ways devoid of Islamic character. Therefore, according to Taymiyyah, they had ceased to be Muslims.

Mawdudi was the main force behind reinvigorating the concept of *jahiliyya* in the 20th Century. As Quintin Wiktorowicz explained:

> Mawdudi's work drew extensively from Taqiud Din Ibn Taymiyyah, the best known medieval Salafi scholar, particularly his writings on the sovereignty of God......in making his argument, Mawdudi introduced the his concept of 'the modern jahiliya' (circa 1939). The term 'jahiliya' refers to the 'period of ignorance' (or period of paganism) preceding the advent of Islam. He argued that the deviations of self-proclaimed Muslims, the influence of imperialist powers, and the use of non-Islamic laws were akin to this earlier period of ignorance.[16]

Mawdudi's definition of *jahiliyya* was more explicit and radical than that of Ibn Taymiyya. Mawdudi reshaped the very idea of *jahiliyya*, declaring that Muslim majority countries adopting laws other than Sharia had drifted away from mainstream Islamic ways. He said:

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15 Trevor Stanley, "Taqi al-Deen Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya," *Perspectives on World History and Current Events*, n.d., *http://www.pwhce.org/taymiyyah.html*, accessed on July 21, 2015.

16 Quintan Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28, no. 2 (2005): 75-97.

> A person who leaves behind God's ways and adopts Kafir ways and lives his life accordingly then he is a complete Kafir…..and anyone who prefers manmade laws then the laws of God is a rebel.[17]

Mawdudi's focus was on breaking away from un-Islamic traditions and turning societies into 'purely Islamic ones'. For him, contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim societies were similar in character, since Muslims have long ago turned away from the 'true Islamic values' and therefore reverted back into the fold of *jahiliyya*. In the words of Roy Jackson, an expert on Mawdudi's religio-political thought, "The state of jahiliyyah is symptomatic of atheism, immoralism, injustice and violence."[18]

Corollary to the theory of *jahiliyya* is the concept of *takfir* (declaring a Muslim apostate), which automatically applies in case of presence of *jahiliyya* notions. According to Mawdudi:

> It is not our meaning that there should be no *takfir* or declaration of wrong-doing at all, so that even if a man speaks and writes clear heresy he should still be called, and taken to be, a Muslim. This is not the meaning of the texts of the Quran and Sunna quoted above, nor of what we have said above. And how could it be? Just as it is harmful to expel a Muslim from Islam, it is no less harmful to include a *kafir* within the Islamic community.[19]

Mawdudi's Application of *Jahiliyya*

Mawdudi applied the concept of *jahiliyya* in the 1930s as a diagnosis to society. His first target was the political leaders of the Pakistan Movement (Tehrik-e Pakistan) in pre-partition India. He criticized Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founder and leader of the Muslim League, because of his secular character and policies of co-opting with the ruling British. According to Vali Nasr, an expert on Jamaat-e-Islami, Mawdudi compared himself to Jinnah and

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17 AbulA'la Mawdudi, *Khutbaat*, author's translation from Urdu, available at http://iqbalkalmati.blogspot.com/2014/10/khutbat-by-syed-abulala-maududi.html

18 Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi*, 157.

19 Abul A'la Mawdudi, "Fitna-e-Takfir," *Tarjumanul Quran*, Lahore, May 1935.English transl. by Dr. Zahid Aziz, http://www.muslim.org/movement/maudoodi/art-takfir.htm, accessed on May 11, 2017.

thought of himself as a better representative of the Muslims of India.[20]

Nasr further explained that the term *jahiliyya* in Mawdudi's vocabulary was more related to Jinnah's party (the Muslim League) of which he was an ardent critic. He said, "jahiliya was no doubt coined to make the contrast between the Muslim League and the Jamaat-e-Islami more apparent."[21] In other words, Mawdudi reintroduced the concept of *jahiliyya* in order to battle his political opponents and score political victories, a battle which he ultimately lost.

After Mawdudi's death in 1979, the concept of *jahiliyya* continued to be used by ideologues in his party, Jamaat-e-Islami. The Islamization process that began during General Zia ul-Haq's military dictatorship from 1980 was in fact designed by JI ideologues that were part of General Zia's interim cabinet.[22] JI intellectuals Professor Khurshid Ahmed and Professor Ghafoor Ahmad joined General Zia's interim military cabinet for the very purposes, right after, he overthrew Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's government and with their aegis General Zia began his Islamization of Pakistani society in 1980.[23]

The islamisation process of General Zia shook the very foundations of Pakistan and sowed the seeds of present-day violent radicalism and extremism. It was the very first time in history that JI managed to execute its Islamist agenda.[24] The

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20 Vali Nasr, *The Vanguard of Islamic Revolution: The Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan*, (London: I. B. Taurus Publishers, 1994), 20.

21 Ibid., 20

22 Farooq Sulheria, "Jamaat in Pakistan," *View Point*, January 18, 2013, available at: *http://www.viewpointonline.net/jamaat-in-pakistan.html*

23 "Profile: Jamaat-e-Islami" Global Security, available at: *http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/pakistan/ji.htm*

24 JI joined the military junta that came into power as a result of coup d'état of General Zia ul-Haq in 1977. The military government of General Zia (1977-88), which launched the islamization process at the behest of JI, transformed Pakistani society tremendously. Salient features of the Islamization process were: Hudood Ordinance (including punishments for adultery with lashing and stoning, and punishment for theft by cutting limbs), Prohibition Order (banning the selling and consumption of alcohol), the Qias and Diyat Ordinance (where murder was made compoundable),

second opportunity came in 2002 during General Pervez Musharraf's military regime when the JI-JUI (MMA) alliance came into power in the North western Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.[25]

Modern Jihadism's Application of *Jahiliyya*

Like Mawdudi, the jihadists in Egypt in the 1960s applied *jahiliyya* as a diagnosis to society. The consequence in this case was not political activism and reform, like in the case of Pakistan, but armed revolution against the state.

Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) was an Egyptian writer and philosopher who had a profound impact of the rise of the jihadist movement in Egypt. He joined the Muslim Brotherhood in 1953, after the military coup in Egypt that brought General Jamal Abdel Nasser to power.[26] During the 1950s and 1960s, the Brotherhood was severely repressed by the Egyptian authorities. This led to the radicalization of Qutb and other Islamists. Suspected of plotting against the regime, Qutb spent long periods in jail. It was in this context he wrote his seminal jihadist manifesto, *Milestones,* published in 1964. While Qutb never met Mawdudi in his lifetime, he drew directly on Mawdudi's writings to re-introduce the concept of *jahiliyya* and apply it to the Egyptian context.

Thus it can be argued that it was not the concept of *jahiliyya* in itself, but the social and historical context of 1960s Egypt, that enabled the creation of the modern jihadist movement. While Qutb and Mawdudi had the same ideas

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and the introduction of Blasphemy Laws with capital punishments. Zia also tried though unsuccessfully to Islamize the Pakistani economy by introducing interest-free banking. For details see the Islamic Provisions in the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

25 Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) or the United Council for Action was an electoral alliance of Islamist parties belonging to all sects, including Barelvi, Shia, Deobandi and Wahhabi parties, during 2002 elections. JI and JUI were two key parties in the alliance. The MMA managed to form government in Khyber province of Pakistan. The alliance seized to exist in 2008 before the elections of 2008. JI boycotted the 2008 elections whereas JUI managed to win seven seats.

26 Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb*, 186.

about *jahiliyya*, the concepts were operationalized in different ways. In Qutb's case, his writings gave oppressed Egyptian Islamists a legitimate reason to fight back, even if it meant fighting other Muslims which is generally forbidden in Islam. Qutb's writings thus inspired the formation of revolutionary jihadi groups like al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya and Jama'at al-Jihad, whose main enemy was the Egyptian regime. This was a result of the severe Government repression, jailing and torture of Egyptian Islamists.

In sum, both Mawdudi and Qutb used the concept of *jahiliyya* as a frame to battle their political opponents. Mawdudi's political opponent was Pakistani nationalists who were not sufficiently 'Islamic', according to Mawdudi. Qutb's opponents were the Egyptian regime which was already using violence against Islamists and Egypt.

They used the concept of *jahiliyya* to frame their 'diagnosis' of what is wrong with society, namely, that the people have left Islam. Their solution, or 'prognosis' was framed as jihad. They both believed that jihad should be carried out by a vanguard of true Muslims. But this realization — that we live in a state of *jahiliyya* and that the solution is jihad — was operationalized in vastly different ways. Mawdudi saw jihad as a predominantly non-violent activity that could be combined with participating in the political life of the modern nation-state of Pakistan. Some of Mawdudi's followers in Pakistan — the jihadi groups that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s — preferred violent jihad, but largely of the 'classical' type that was directed towards non-Muslim 'occupants' like the USSR and India. Qutb's introduction of *jahiliyya* in Egypt created a more violent operationalization. To declare the Egyptian regime as ignorant legitimized armed jihad against it. This led to a fundamental re-interpretation of the concept of jihad and the rise of revolutionary jihadism.

Theories of *Jihad*

Mawdudi's most-quoted texts among jihadists is *Jihad fi Sabil Allah* (Jihad in the Way of God), based on a speech he gave in the Town Hall of Lahore in 1939. In textual form it is a relatively short article; 39 pages in English.[27] The speech was given at the height of the Indian independence movement and contains a powerful call for collective action framed in Islamic terms.

At the time, the speech was a critique of what Mawdudi termed the 'apologetic' Islamists, who argued that Islam is a peaceful religion and that 'jihad' is mainly a spiritual, not an actual, struggle. In contrast, Mawdudi argued that Islam is a "… revolutionary ideology that seeks to alter the social order of the entire world." 'Muslims' are the revolutionaries that will make change happen, and 'jihad' is their method for change. Mawdudi based his concept of *Jihad fi Sabilillah* on Quran, *"Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who reject Faith fight in the cause of Evil (al-Taghut)..." (Al - Qur'an 4:76).*[28]

Mawdudi opened his 1939 speech by calling for a struggle against colonializing powers, just like Islamist movement did later (Osama bin Laden in particular). "No portion of this planet has been spared from bloodshed by these colonialists," he argued.[29]

In Mawdudian terms, *jihad* is not war in the traditional sense, but a revolutionary programme aiming to introduce a complete system for welfare for the entire world. Jihad includes more than fighting. Mawdudi defines jihad as "exerting one's utmost behaviour in promoting a cause."[30] Examples of methods are proselytizing, financial support, and physical exertion. He also holds that revolution is not restricted to a particular class (like Communism or Socialism) but to the whole of mankind. In sum, the aim of jihad is to bring about social justice and to enforce Islam's reformation programme which is in the best interest of

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27 Abul A'la al-Mawdudi, *Jihad in Islam,* transl. to English by Abdul Waheed Khan (Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd., n.d.)

28 *Jihad in Islam*, 8.

29 *Jihad in Islam*, 2.

30 *Jihad in Islam*, 5-6.

mankind, because it will "rescue" mankind from oppression.[31]

Mawdudi talks about an "International Revolutionary Party"[32] to bring about revolutionary change through an all-out campaign. The party must "capture power," it cannot exist under an alien rule. Again, he uses Qur'anic reference to back up his arguments: *"A party amongst you must be there to promote the good and suppress the evil"* (Al-e-Imran: 104)

Mawdudi believes in the completeness of jihad – jihad as an essential part of Muslim identity: As he said, 'Jihad is the identity of true Muslim.'[33]

> … when a true Muslim finds that there is a system on earth other than the system of Allah then the real test of the Muslim is to attempt and remove this ungodly system and replaces it with the Allah's Deen.[34]

The book *Jihad Fi Sabillilah* highlighted the significance of jihad as the solution to the problems Muslims are facing (i.e. *jahiliyya*):

> It must now be obvious that the objective of the Islamic jihad is to eliminate the rule of an un-Islamic system, and establish in its place an Islamic system of state rule. Islam does not intend to confine his rule to a single state or a hand full of countries. The aim of Islam is to bring about a universal revolution. Although in the initial stages, it is incumbent upon members of the party of Islam to carry out a revolution in the state system of the countries to which they belong; their ultimate objective is none other than world revolution.[35]

In sum, Mawdudi's text is a call for complete destruction and then rebuilding of the existing social order.[36] It is led by

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31 *Jihad in Islam*, 20.

32 *Jihad in Islam*, 16.

33 Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Khutbaat*, translated by the author from Urdu, available at: http://iqbalkalmati.blogspot.com/2014/10/khutbat-by-syed-abulala-maududi.html

34 Mawdudi, *Khutbaat,*

35 Abul A'la Mawdudi, "Jihad Fi Sabillilah (Jihad for Allah)", *Tarjuman-ul Quran*, Lahore(1948): 10

36 Rachael M Rudolph and Dr Anisseh van Engeland, *From Terrorism to Politics* (Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 101-102.

a revolutionary party of pious Muslims.[37] The sole purpose of Jihad is to wipe out un-Islamic norms and customs and finally establish an Islamic state devoid of nationalism or any other form of un-Islamic concepts.[38] It is irrelevant to think about 'defensive' or 'offensive' jihad as the Islamic revolution would be universal.[39] It demands that all people subject to Islam's rule but it is framed as a liberation, not as a subjugation.

Mawdudi's Application of *Jihad*

Mawdudi's universal call to jihad was mostly translated to a call to 'political jihad' — gaining Islamic influence through political activism. It was not until after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the same year that Mawdudi died, that the jihad concept gained a distinct militant flavour in Pakistan. In the 1980s, Mawdudi's party, Jamaat-e-Islami, was given a pivotal role in franchising jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

At the same time, the military *coup* of Zia ul-Haq and his 'Islamization' programme gave more power to the JI. Pakistani military dictator General Zia ul-Haq institutionalized JI's brand of Islam to pervade and penetrate the Pakistani state. This was useful for him because it gave him support to continue his dictatorial rule and to mobilize JI workers and JI-inspired groups to provide manpower for war in Afghanistan.[40]

It is worth noting that political Islamists, like the JI or the Muslim Brotherhood, do not necessarily reject the idea of violent jihad. On the contrary, they want to keep their options open for getting into power, either by political means or by clandestinely supporting Islamist violent non-state actors

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37 Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Jihad in Islam* (Beirut: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 2006), 5.

38 Mawdudi, *Jihad in Islam*, 6.

39 Mawdudi, *Jihad in Islam*, 25.

40 Furthermore, JI supported the Pakistani Army's military operation in East Pakistan against Bengali nationalist forces during the civil war in 1971. Two Islamist militias, Al-Badar and Al-Shams were raised to curb the Bengali nationalist party Awami League and its militant wing, Mukti Bahini.

behind the scenes. For example, during the Afghan-Soviet War, JI established several militant wings and got its cadres trained at camps established in order to train Afghan mujahidin with US and Saudi support.[41] In this period violent jihadi groups were formed, including Harakat-ul Jihad Islami (HuJI), Harakat-ul Mujahedeen (HuM), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM). The development may be seen as parallel to that which happened in Egypt in the 1960s and 19670s, when violent groups such as Takfirwal-Hijra, al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya and Jama'at al-Jihad were formed as offshoots from, or in reaction to, the mainstream Islamist movement at the time, the Muslim Brotherhood.

Modern Jihadism's Application of *Jihad*

The jihadists translated jihad into a call for violent action. The action took two forms. In Egypt in the 1960s and 1970s, violent jihad was directed against the Egyptian government and was seen as a natural consequence of its *jahiliyya,* or un-Islamic character. This form of jihad is also known as 'revolutionary' jihad.

The other form is the 'classical' or transnational jihad which was born out of the 1980s war in Afghanistan. Transnational jihadism was in a way was closer to Mawdudi's original ideas from the 1930s. Mawdudi's description of jihad as a way of life, total programme, and fundamental part of Muslim identity resemble the ideas presented in the 1980s by the Palestinian jihadi ideologue Abdullah Azzam (1941-1989). While Mawdudi had preached about an internationalist jihadist movement, it was not until the 1980s and the rise of Abdullah Azzam to prominence, that such a movement actually emerged. The historical context which was vital to its development was the Afghan-Soviet war. As the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 was seen by radical Islamists as 'foreign occupation' it was natural to frame the jihad in classical terms. The Pakistani state supported this framing and used it to further its own security policy interests. Jihadi proxies were used to further

41 Mawdudi, *Jihad in Islam*, 166-167

Pakistani foreign policy interests in Afghanistan and Kashmir, while at the same time these proxies were diverted away from attacking the Pakistani government. The Saudi Arabian government followed a similar strategy in the 1980s and 1990s by tolerating, and in some cases encouraging, Saudi volunteer fighters going to faraway conflict theatres such as Afghanistan, and later Bosnia and Chechnya.[42] The strategies of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan eventually backfired. Saudi Arabia experienced a campaign of domestic, jihadi violence in 2003-2008. Pakistan experienced the same from 2007, when groups such as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) started targeting the Pakistani state.

In the wake of the Afghan-Soviet war, a third form of jihadism emerged: The ‘global jihadism’ of Osama bin Laden. The historical events that gave rise to this development were the end of the Cold War and the rise of the United States as the world’s sole superpower. The United States became a convenient scapegoat for explaining why jihad had failed to achieve its goals in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Some of the jihadists then came up with a new prognosis of society: While the prognosis earlier had been that Muslims live in a state of ignorance (*jahiliyya*), the prognosis now was that Muslims are not fighting the right enemy. This is what al-Qaida saw it as its goal to rectify, by calling for a jihad against the United States.

Abdullah Azzam’s and Osama bin Laden’s calls for universal jihad was not very different from Mawdudi’s. Like Mawdudi, they described jihad as an individual, universal duty for all Muslims, and a complete way of life. But Mawdudi’s call to universal jihad did not translate immediately into an armed movement. Bin Laden’s call in 1990s resonated stronger with Muslim audiences because he appointed a clearly defined enemy that resonated with anti-American sentiment that was widespread in the Muslim world: Both in the Middle East, due to US support for Israel

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42 Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 30-37.

after 1947, and on the Indian Subcontinent due to US 'abandonment' of Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, causing the country to eventually plunge into civil war. In addition, bin Laden backed up his threats with spectacular acts of terrorism culminating with the 9/11 attacks.

Theories of the Islamic State

In general Mawdudi, like all other Islamists, believed in the ultimate establishment of an Islamic Caliphate, as he said:

> The political system of Islam has been based on three principles, viz., Tawheed (Oneness of God), Risalat (Prophethood) and Khilafat (Caliphate). It is difficult to appreciate the different aspects of the Islamic policy without fully understanding these three principles.[43]

In principle, Mawdudi's vision of the Caliphate as a total system of government, is not very different from al-Qaida's or Islamic State's vision. But again, their operationalization, or their application of the concept to modern society — differed fundamentally. Mawdudi believed the Caliphate could be achieved through gradual political activism in the framework of modern democracy. He coined the concept of 'theo-democracy' to describe his vision of the state.

By theo-democracy, Mawdudi does not mean modern, liberal political governance, but participation in general elections to establish the Islamist rule, in cases when seizure of power is not in sight by other means.[44] In Islamist jargon it is also called political jihad. In other words it could be defined as 'one party rule' that would serve as the vanguard of the Islamic revolution.

Mawdudi has nevertheless been criticized. Taj Hashimi called Mawdudi's (and the Muslim Brotherhood's) vision of governance "fascist" and "totalitarian" because Islam is the only accepted form of government. He explains:

> In his "theo-democratic" caliphate, minority non-Muslims would remain as zimmis or protected people with inferior rights… [JI and

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43 Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Islamic Way of Life*, *http://www.islambasics.com/view.php?bkID=70.*

44 Author's discussions with former member of Jamaat-e-Islami, September 10, 2015.

> MB's] lip service to democracy and apparent acquiescence to secular law reflect their pragmatism, not their transformation into liberal democratic organisations. One finds JI's fascist blue print in some of its founder Mawdudi's writings. His totalitarian "Islamic State" would eventually devour the sovereignty of all neighbouring states run by non-Muslims or not in accordance with Shariah.[45]

Mawdudi's Application of the 'Islamic State'

The concept of theo-democracy or Islamic democracy is part and parcel of JI's core ideology. It is also a bone of contention between JI and other militant Islamists in Pakistan, as well as between the Muslim Brotherhood and jihadists like al-Qaida. Militant islamists do not believe in the democratic process and condemn it to be un-Islamic, and they see militant jihad as the only viable option for change. An analysis based on the Abbottabad letters said:

> In line with al-Qa`ida's traditional stance, Bin Ladin dismissed the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) and similar Islamist groups, accusing them of being in pursuit of "half solutions" (ansaf al-hulul). This, in his parlance, means that although they raised the banner of Islam in their political discourse, they deviated from its teachings when they agreed to pursue their objectives through the electoral process. This is the spirit that underlies the statements made by al-Qa`ida's leaders when they accuse Islamists of compromising God's Law when they form political parties and contest elections that are regulated by positive law (qawanin wad`iyya).[46]

Even if JI supports theo-democracy, it does not mean that they abandon militant jihad. JI continued to support militant jihadism and raised its own militant wings whenever the conditions were favourable. The very proof is JI's participation against Bengali nationalists during 1971's Civil War where JI's militant groups Al-Badar and Al-Shams fought as irregular militias against the democratically elected Bengali nationalist party Awami League on the behest of Pakistani military dictatorship.

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45 Taj Hashmi, "Muslim Brotherhood, Jamaat-i-Islami and Global Jihad," *Daily Star*, July 28, 2014,http://www.thedailystar.net/muslim-brotherhood-jamaat-i-islami-and-global-jihad-35118

46 Nelly Lahoudet al., *Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2012), 48.

On a second occasion, JI played a pivotal role by the side of Islamist military dictatorship of General Zia ul-Haq during Afghan War of 1980s.[47] This is basis for the argument that parties like Jamaat-e-Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood are "jihadists in disguise." But there are crucial differences. Islamists see jihad in the same way states see war – it is a tool of the state, to be used in case no other options are valid. For jihadists, the matter is quite different due to their total rejection of political pluralism, making jihad the desired, preferred and legitimate tool for establishing the Islamic state.

Jihadist Application of the 'Islamic State'

Jihadists and Mawdudi differ in their chosen methodology of how to achieve the Islamic State. The main distinction is their view on political pluralism; the existence of non-Islamist political parties. Jihadists reject the democratic process altogether, believing that power-sharing with non-Islamists is equal to heresy. These differences are due to the different contexts of JI and the jihadists: JI rejected nationalism as a unifying ideology in pre-partition India. Jihadists in the 1960 and 1970s rejected not only nationalism as ideology, but democracy as a framework of activism due to the repeated failures of the Muslim Brotherhood to achieve power in the Middle East.

That being said, the jihadists' final version of the Islamic state is not very different. Both Mawdudi and jihadists envision a state ruled by Islamic laws. This includes giving protection to other religious minorities, like Jews and Christians, under certain conditions. The difference is that the Mawdudian interpretation of Islam tolerates the modern system of nation-states as a temporary solution towards the ultimate goal, working within its framework. Jihadists reject it completely and believe it is necessary to use violence to

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47 Lionel Baixas, "Thematic Chronology of Mass Violence in Pakistan, 1947-2007," *Online Encyclopaedia of Mass Violence*, *http://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/fr/document/thematic-chronology-mass-violence-pakistan-1947-2007*, 9.

challenge it. Jihadists instead create their own states, or statelets (often termed 'emirates') whenever gaining territorial control.[48]

The territory does not have to be big. Jihadists, including the present-day Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria, justify their actions by referring to the example of the Prophet Muhammed, who established the first Islamic state in the city of Medina in the 7th Century. These statelets are usually created on the fringes of modern nation-states, typically in loosely governed tribal areas.[49] These statelets are used as launch pads to expand, whenever conditions allow for it. In the meantime jihadists will seek to implement a complete version of Sharia Law in the territories they govern.

Conclusion

Jihadists use Mawdudian terms quite often, though on many occasions he did not get the credit of revitalizing these terms. Most of the credit goes to Arab jihadist thinkers like Sayyid Qutb. While the theological arguments are similar, the operationalization of Mawdudian concepts like *jahiliyya* and jihad was vastly different in Mawdudi's India and Pakistan in 1930-1979, and in Egypt in the 1960s and 1970s.

Mawdudi's party, Jamaat-e-Islami, was competing with nationalists and communists for providing the dominant political ideology of the time. Its main distinguishing feature was to promote a society based on Islamic principles. Jihadists, in contrast, were not competing with un-Islamic ideologies like communism and nationalism. They were competing with mainstream Islamists. Their main distinguishing feature was their rejection of democracy as a way of activism.

Both Mawdudi and the modern jihadists like Qutb wanted to promote a society based on Islamic principles, but they differed in their methods. Islamist parties like JI wanted

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48 Brynjar Lia, "Understanding Jihadi Proto-States," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (2015): 31-41

49 Lia, "Understanding Jihadi Proto-States,".

to work through modern political institutions while jihadists wanted to achieve the goal mainly through violence — based on the past failures of Muslim Brotherhood and similar institutions to come to power through non-violent means.

The question is whether Islamist political parties are an incubator or firewall against violent jihadism. Many would argue that after the commencement of the global war on terror, and destruction of al-Qaida's infrastructure and networks, al-Qaida is more than ever dependent on associated movements and their patron islamist parties which often have a legal status in Muslim countries.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to answer this question. However, this study hypothesizes that it largely depends on the nature of the Islamist movement or party and the context in which it operates. Movements influenced by nationalist sentiment such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami, differ from movements inspired by Salafism and pan-Islamism. Likewise, movements that operate in hostile and repressive environments, such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1960s and 1970s, differ from movements operating as legal political parties and with a relative freedom of expression.

The difference between jihadists and Mawdudi lie not in their acknowledgement of *jahiliyya* or jihad as a total methodology for revolution. The difference lies in their operationalization of these concepts as a response to a current political situation. For Mawdudi, it was important to create a party focused solely on Islam as the basis for government, rather than Islam mixed with nationalism which was the idea of Mawdudi's main contender, the Muslim League.

The jihadists may be viewed as a social movement created in reaction to mainstream Islamists, the Muslim Brotherhood. To differ from their opponents they put stronger emphasis on the concept of militant jihad, and the rejection of political pluralism, because they argued these were the reasons for the Muslim Brotherhood's repeated failures in establishing an Islamic state. Thus, the Mawdudian concept of a universal and all-encompassing jihad took on a distinctly violent and uncompromising flavour. This was possible due to the ambiguities inherent in Mawdudi's original texts, which allowed for different operationalizations to suit contemporary political needs.