



Contextualizing Hadith in The Fight Against Extremism: A Framework for Modern Islamic Thought

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ABSTRACT

The impact of extremist groups' misinterpretation and misuse of Hadith has dented Muslim communities' social cohesion, their relationship with the rest of the world, and Islam's image as a unifying framework. This paper analyze the issues related to the abuse of Hadith and formulate a comprehensive plan to address them. That plan would suggest to scholars overcoming extremist documents by developing a relevant and modern bound framework of authentic and contextualized Hadith formulated on true Islamic principles. To counteract the division within the Muslim community, leading Muslim scholars must unite and promote collaborative initiatives aimed at constructing a monolithic view of Islam rooted in peace, tolerance, and justice. Furthermore, actively communicating the true reflections of Islam contained within the Hadith to the educated Muslims, especially the youth, using other media-educational campaigns and dashboards integrated into school curricula should be of utmost priority. Participation in the formulation of concepts of social order based on Hadith, together with active public involvement designed to counteract extremist violence, designed to cultivate harmonious public relations will allow us to counter extremism while nurturing the splendid image of the Hadith. Through these measures, the Muslim controversial societies will be able to promote just compassion and peace to the world.

Keywords: Hadith, extremism, misinterpretation, Islamic scholarship, peace, tolerance, education, social harmony, youth, moderation.

Introduction

The Hadith, as the second primary source of Islamic teachings after the Qur'an, plays a pivotal role in shaping Muslim thought, jurisprudence, and daily practice. This is largely foreseen as a problem because of extremist groups adopting Hadith and applying violence to truly peaceful sayings and radicalizing ideologies that pose danger to humanity as a whole. Although extremist groups use Hadith to justify violence, stripping important nuances like context and history, it still lacks justification (Esposito, 2011). This manipulation distorts Islamic teachings which fuel sectarian conflicts that Islam seeks to avoid. The need to reclaim the genuine Hadith is paramount today due to the increasing extremism since the 9/11 attacks in the west. Counter radicalization is an issue the world is facing now and places more pressure on Muslim scholars to address it, this allows people to challenge Islamic narratives that claim aggression (Ramadan, 2009).



Extremism, as a global phenomenon, thrives on the exploitation of religious texts to recruit followers and justify violent actions. Groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda have weaponized Hadith, using them to promote a distorted version of Islam that aligns with their political and ideological goals. For instance, the Hadith

"أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أُقَاتِلَ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَشْهَدُوا أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ"

("I have been commanded to fight people until they testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah" – Sahih al-Bukhari) This citation is frequently used without prior context to validate militant activities directed at non-Muslims. Nonetheless, experts contend that this Hadith applies to a particular period of the early Islamic expansions known as conquests and cannot be extrapolated to contemporary times (Brown, 2017). The overarching frame of extremism, characterized by volatile politics, socio-economic divides, and social disconnect, intensifies the exploitation of religious scripture. Tackling the concerns needs sophisticated grasp of the Hadith that marries its past with modern-day challenges.

The importance of Hadith in the development of Islamic civilization cannot be ignored. It acts as a link to the Qur'an and its functional application, equipping Muslims to live a righteous life as prescribed. There are also issues with interpreting Hadith since it requires extensive familiarity with its isnad, matn, and context. In contemporary times, this is made worse by the presence of extremist views that seek to distort and misuse religious texts. Thus, reinterpretation of Hadith in the context of modernity is extremely important. It allows scholars to remove extremist narratives by framing the discussion within more contextualized interpretations of Islam that emphasize peace, justice, and coexistence. This approach preserves the Islamic narrative while supporting the fight against extremism and the promotion of inter-religious dialogues (Saeed, 2006).

Historical and Theoretical Background of Extremism

(a) Definition and Types of Extremism

Extremism, in its broadest sense, refers to the advocacy or support for extreme measures, ideologies, or actions that deviate significantly from mainstream norms and values. It appears in several guises such as religious extremism, political extremism, and social and ideological extremism. Approximately one form of social extremism is religious extremism and, in the case of Islam, it essentially amounts to the rigidly violent interpretation of scripture. Political extremism is sought to violently replace a given political order that is perceived as impure, often claiming some ideological or religious righteousness. Social and Ideological extremism includes movements that reject prevailing accepted customs and traditions and advocate for radical shifts in the social or cultural arrangement (Hafez, 2007). The above forms of extremism do not exist in isolation and tend to confluence, which gives rise to a myriad array of justifications and motivations for violent actions. Take for example ISIS which fuses religious and political extremism in seeking to impose a caliphate. A deeper understanding of the typologies of extremism



enhances the ability to devise tailored responses to countered the targeted form of extremism.

(b) Causes of Extremism in Islamic History

The roots of extremism in Islamic history can be traced back to sectarianism and conflicts among religious groups. Early Islamic history witnessed the emergence of sects such as the Kharijites, who adopted extremist views and resorted to violence against those they deemed as deviating from "true" Islam. Their infamous slogan

"لا حكم إلا لله"

("No judgment except for Allah") It provided rationale for violence and societal chaos where none was needed, all in the name of rebellion against the caliphate (Lewis, 2003). The weakness in power dynamics and chronic instability served as fertile grounds for fanaticism while competing groups attempted to consolidate power in policies verbiage militaristic language. The same could be said about the Umayyad's Abbasid revolution cross-over where religion was politicized and politically motivated. In addition, understanding religious texts is important for ideological constructs, and accurately interpreting them is equally vital, especially removing contextual elements. Extremist groups love to rely on Hadith and Qur'anic verses, using them selectively and devoiding them of their historical context. For instance, the Hadith

"الجهاد ماضي إلى يوم القيامة"

("Jihad will continue until the Day of Judgment" – Sunan Abu Dawood) is often misused to justify perpetual warfare, despite its broader spiritual and defensive connotations (Bonner, 2006). These historical factors highlight the complex interplay between religion, politics, and ideology in the rise of extremism.

(c) Modern Factors Contributing to Extremism

The amalgamation of international politics and conflicts intensifies the threat of extremism in contemporary society. The rise of militant groups in Afghanistan with external power support to counter Soviet influence is an example of this trend during the Cold War, which fostered extremist ideologies (Rashid, 2008). Similarly, archetypal ISIS precursors seized the opportunity granted by the 2003 Iraq invasion followed by a power vacuum. Social media has additionally worsened the issue by allowing extremism propaganda and recruitment to be disseminated on a global level. Vulnerable individuals have been targeted through Twitter and Facebook by the dissemination of misinterpreted Hadith and Qur'anic verse propoganda, targeting young impressionable minds (Awan, 2017). Additionally, the actions of powerful states in funding ideologically extreme groups for their geopolitical objectives pays little regard to social ramifications. The sheer existence of such funding from Gulf states undermines efforts towards curtailing radical ideologies (Hegghammer, 2010). Historical grievances coupled with modern factors create an environment in dire need of attention. Euclidian approaches to extremism tend to miss the mark as they fail to consider the enabling conditions and root causes required in addressing the issue.



3. Theoretical and Practical Background of Hadith

(a) Definition and Importance of Hadith

Hadith, the recorded sayings, actions, and approvals of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), serves as the second primary source of Islamic teachings after the Qur'an. The relationship between the Qur'an and Hadith is symbiotic; while the Qur'an provides the foundational principles of Islam, Hadith offers practical guidance on their implementation. For example, the Qur'an commands prayer (*Salah*), but it is the Hadith that details its performance, as seen in the Prophet's statement:

"صَلُّوا كَمَا رَأَيْتُمُونِي أُصَلِّي"

("Pray as you have seen me praying" – Sahih al-Bukhari). Hadith is categorized into three types: Qawli (sayings), Fi'li (actions), and Taqriri (silent approvals), each providing unique insights into the Prophet's life and teachings (Siddiqi, 2006). In Islamic law (*Sharia*) and ethics, Hadith plays a crucial role in deriving rulings and moral guidelines. For instance, the Hadith

"إنما الأعمال بالنيات"

("Actions are judged by intentions" – Sahih al-Bukhari) forms the basis for ethical conduct in Islam. Thus, Hadith is indispensable for understanding and practicing Islam in its entirety.

(b) Concept of Peace, Tolerance, and Harmony in Hadith

The Hadith literature emphasizes principles of peace, tolerance, and harmony, which are central to Islamic teachings. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged respecting differences of opinion, as seen in his statement:

"اِخْتِلَافُ أُمَّتِي رَحْمَةٌ"

("The differences of my Ummah are a mercy" – Al-Suyuti, *Al-Jami' al-Saghir*). This highlights the value of diversity within the Muslim community. Additionally, the Hadith promotes acknowledging and respecting other faiths. For example, the Prophet said:

"مَنْ قَتَلَ مُعَاهِدًا لَمْ يَرِحْ رَائِحَةَ الْجَنَّةِ"

("Whoever kills a non-Muslim under covenant will not smell the fragrance of Paradise" – Sahih al-Bukhari), underscoring the sanctity of peaceful coexistence with non-Muslims. The principles of peaceful coexistence are further reinforced in Hadiths that advocate for justice and kindness, such as:

"الرَّاحِمُونَ يَرْحَمُهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ"

("The merciful are shown mercy by the Most Merciful" – Sunan al-Tirmidhi). These teachings form the foundation of a harmonious society built on mutual respect and understanding.

(c) Condemnation of Extremism in Hadith

The Hadith literature explicitly condemns extremism and warns against excess in religious practices. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) cautioned:

"إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغُلُوفِي الدِّينِ، فَإِنَّمَا أَهْلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ الْغُلُوفِي الدِّينِ"



("Beware of extremism in religion, for those before you were destroyed due to extremism in religion" – Sunan Ibn Majah). This Hadith highlights the dangers of radical interpretations and the importance of moderation. The Prophet also emphasized balanced behavior, stating:

"خَيْرُ الْأُمُورِ أَوْسَطُهَا"

("The best of matters are the middle ones" – Al-Bayhaqi, *Shu'ab al-Iman*). Furthermore, Hadiths stress the importance of reconciliation and peacebuilding. For instance, the Prophet said:

"أَلَا أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِأَفْضَلِ مَنْ دَرَجَةِ الصِّيَامِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَالصَّدَقَةِ؟ قَالُوا: بَلَى. قَالَ: إِصْلَاحُ ذَاتِ
الْبَيْنِ"

("Shall I inform you of something better than fasting, prayer, and charity? They said: Yes. He said: Reconciling between people" – Sunan Abu Dawood). These teachings underscore Islam's commitment to moderation, peace, and the rejection of extremism.

Applying Hadith as a Strategic Tool Against Extremism in Modern Islamic Thought

(a) Modern Interpretation of Hadith

In the face of modern intellectual and social challenges, the interpretation of Hadith must evolve to remain relevant and effective. Contemporary Islamic scholars play a crucial role in recontextualizing Hadith to address issues such as extremism, globalization, and technological advancements. For example, the Hadith

"اطْلُبُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنَ الْمَهْدِ إِلَى اللَّحْدِ"

("Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave" – Al-Bayhaqi) it highlights the unlimited thrust of learning and acquiring knowledge. It is utmost necessary to propagate the Ijtihad by theologians to convince more people. This calls for both the historical appreciation of the Hadith and application of its timeless merits to modern-day challenges. Take for example, the Hadith

"لَا ضَرَرَ وَلَا ضِرَارَ"

("There should be no harm nor reciprocation of harm" – Sunan Ibn Majah) this intends to counter extremism and promote peace through justice and equality. Through ijtiḥad, scholars are able to unify the traditional framework with contemporary teachings, and provide answers that are reasonable and true to the teachings (Kamali, 2003).

(b) Developing a Strategic Framework to Counter Extremism Based on Hadith

A strategic framework to counter extremism must be rooted in the teachings of Hadith, which promote tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and interfaith understanding. The Hadith

"مَنْ لَمْ يَرْحَمْ النَّاسَ لَا يَرْحَمْهُ اللَّهُ"

("Whoever does not show mercy to people, Allah will not show mercy to him" – Sahih Muslim) Emphasizes on how compassion and empathy allows for the growth of harmonious societies. In combating extremism, Muslim communities need to



promote dialogue across other faiths following the Prophet's relations with non-Muslims like the Christians of Najran. Educational projects need to focus on the healing and temperate teachings of Hadith to Muslim children in an effort to combat the narrations set forth by extremists. For example, the Hadith

"إِنَّ الدِّينَ يُسْرٌ"

("Indeed, religion is easy" – Sahih al-Bukhari) can be used to emphasize Islam's rejection of rigidity and extremism. By fostering a culture of critical thinking and open dialogue, communities can build resilience against extremist ideologies (Ramadan, 2009).

(c) Practical Recommendations for Modern Muslim Societies

In order to properly combat extremism, contemporary Muslim societies need to incorporate teachings from hadith into the education of Muslim youth, so that they are not misled about the fundamentals of Islam. For instance, the Hadith

"تَرَكْتُ فِيكُمْ أَمْرَيْنِ لَنْ تَضِلُّوا مَا تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا: كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَسُنَّةَ نَبِيِّهِ"

("I have left among you two things; you will never go astray as long as you hold fast to them: the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet" – Muwatta Malik) It can be helpful for teaching the value of moderation and the genuine effort of references. Places of worship and religious scholars need more active teaching of hadith through today's problems from hadith discussions and lectures. Also messages like peace and tolerance that are found in hadith can be passed through media and social platforms. Narrated in the given Hadith

"الْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ"

("A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand others are safe" – Sahih al-Bukhari) can counter extremist narratives and promote a positive image of Islam. Through these injunction, the Muslims societies could build a peaceful environment avoiding extremist propagandas (Saeed, 2006).

Challenges and Issues

(a) Misinterpretation of Hadith and Its Consequences

The misinterpretation of Hadith has far-reaching consequences, both for Muslim communities and the broader global society. When Hadith is taken out of context or stripped of its historical and linguistic nuances, it can be used to justify actions that are contrary to the spirit of Islam. For example, the Hadith

"أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَقَاتِلَ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَشْهَدُوا أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ"

("I have been commanded to fight people until they testify that there is no god but Allah" – Sahih al-Bukhari) is frequently taken from context by radical movements to validate aggression toward non-Muslims. Yet some scholars contend that this Hadith pertains to a particular period during the early Islamic conquests and is not applicable to today's world (Brown, 2017). Such distortions sully the teachings of Islam, deepen sectarian rifts, weaken social unity, and increase the rates of extremism. The effects are observed with the upsurge of fanatical movements around the world that misuse religion to gather support and justify their terrorism.

(b) Exploitation of Hadith by Extremist Groups



Terrorist organizations like ISIS and Al-Qaeda have used Hadith to further their ideological and political objectives. They quote selective Hadith out of context, ignoring the ethical teaching, in order to justify their radical agenda. For example, the Hadith

"الجهاد ماضٍ إلى يوم القيامة"

("Jihad will continue until the Day of Judgment" – Sunan Abu Dawood) is frequently misapplied to rationalize endless conflict, armed disputes, or fighting regardless of the contextual setting (Bonner, 2006). Through the misuse of Hadith, these groups target the impressionable, especially the youth, and indoctrinate them into a mindset that claims violence is obligatory. These dangerously superficial constructs not only distort the truth of Islam, but also serve to create a baseless contrast of Muslims and non-Muslims that is highly untrustworthy.

(c) Divergence in Interpretation Among Different Islamic Schools of Thought

The diversity of Islamic schools of thought, while a source of richness in Islamic scholarship, also contributes to divergent interpretations of Hadith. For example, the Hadith

"اختلاف أمّتي رحمة"

("The differences of my Ummah are a mercy" – Al-Suyuti, *Al-Jami' al-Saghir*) highlights the value of intellectual diversity. However, this diversity can sometimes lead to conflicting interpretations, particularly in sensitive areas such as jihad, governance, and social ethics. For instance, some schools may interpret the Hadith

"لا طاعة لمخلوق في معصية الخالق"

("There is no obedience to any creature in disobedience to the Creator" – Musnad Ahmad) Some people view it as inciting revolt against unfair governance, while others focus on perpetuating social order. Extremist groups take advantage of this cultural gap to justify their actions, which makes it harder to achieve a cohesive and neutral depiction of Islam (Esposito, 2011).

(d) Modern Intellectual and Social Challenges in Understanding Hadith

In the modern era, understanding Hadith is further complicated by intellectual and social challenges. The rise of secularism, globalization, and technological advancements has created a disconnect between traditional Islamic scholarship and contemporary realities. For example, the Hadith

"كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ"

("Each of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock". (Sahih al-Bukhari) stresses the need for leadership alongside accountability. However, applying this principle in contemporary contexts like corporate social responsibility or social media influence requires a synthesis of modern and traditional knowledge. Moreover, the swift transmission of information over the internet has allowed radical groups to propagate perverse and perverse versions of Hadith to vulnerable people with no real educational foundation. Meeting these challenges calls for an urgent rethinking of Islamic pedagogy that fosters creativity and deals with current affairs through the scope of Hadith (Ramadan, 2009)..



Recommendations and Suggestions

In order to solve the problems related to the misuse and misinterpretation of Hadith, it is of utmost importance to create a methodology concerning the interpretation of Hadith meant for modern contexts. This method must integrate historical scholarship with modern realities so that Hadith can be respected and applied appropriately. It is best to strive for the integration of a Hadith considering all the crucial elements of its background such as the history, language, culture and also revolve around contemporary socio-intellectual issues. For example, the Hadith

"إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ"

("I was sent to perfect good character" – Musnad Ahmad) can underscore the critical cross-temporal and cross-spatial ethics and morality principles. It also means Muslim societies can stem extremist ideologies by promoting a cohesive worldview of Islam through a unified approach. Intra-Islamic dialogue between scholars is equally important for coping with the problematic aspects of differing interpretations of Hadith. Interdisciplinary dialogue for the resolution of disagreements like that on jihad or political authority in Islam should be encouraged among scholars from rival schools. The Hadith

"الْمُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ كَالْبُنْيَانِ يَشُدُّ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا"

("The believers are like a single structure, each part strengthening the other" – Sahih Muslim) concentrate on the Muslim society about working together, collaboration. Encouraging dialogue helps scholars bridge gaps in thinking, quell sectarian passions, and come together to fight against extreme ideologies. These works will help in creating effective strategies for resolving modern issues while preserving the guiding and inspiring power of Hadith. As cited, Muslims should prepare the youth with the true meanings of Hadith so as to not succumb to extremist ideologies. Such lesson plans ought to be built around the teachings of Hadith focusing on moderation, tolerance, and peace. For instance, the Hadith

"خَيْرُ الْأُمُورِ أَوْسَطُهَا"

("The best of matters are the middle ones" – Al-Bayhaqi) It certainly aids in the moderation of all aspects of life. Furthermore, within Islam, the teachings of hadith urge proactive leadership to be taken by religious organizations, media outlets, as well as mosques, which should foster propagandistic workshops and campaigns aimed towards conveying the truth of Islam as a religion of peace. The Muslim countries may eliminate extremism, help interreligious dialogue and cooperation, and contribute to more humane and just world through observance of hadith-based social order principles of peace and harmony.

Conclusion

In short, the extreme interpretation and undertaken hadith by radical groups profoundly affect Muslims and the world. Not only do these actions distort Islam, they also create division, violence, and trust issues, thus amplifying the false narrative of a religion that, fundamentally, embraces peace, justice, and mercy.



The solution lies within a blend of advanced work, policy, sponsored educational initiatives, and grassroots efforts. Muslim scholars bear the risk of losing Islam by allowing the corpus of hadith's criticism to go unchallenged which requires constructing a modern interpretation of hadith relevant to today's society. This counters the extremist portrayal of hadith by showing its true spirit which is moderation, wisdom, and ethical conduct. These actions help combat the false "narrative of Islam" the attempt to subvert it into an extremist ideology. To most effectively lessen the impact of extremist Islam, dialogue and cooperation among scholars of Islam is one critical avenue. It fosters scholarship, but, also, fragments and confuses the discourse when wielded by extremists who lack a unifying narrative in Islamic scholarship. Different schools of thought foster constructive dialogue that resolves disputes and cohesive narratives that present Islam as a peaceful, tolerant, and just religion. Such collaborations strengthen intellectual borders of the religion while enabling disempowering arguments that defeat counter-ideologies. Understanding each other enables scholars to close the gaps of ideological divides, fostering the reduction of sectarian conflict and nurturing a single community of Muslims who can dynamically resist extremist havoc control over disruption.

In resolving what motivates extremist behavior among Muslim youth, teaching Hadith is very instrumental. Unlike other religious groups, young Muslims are more susceptible to radicalized and militant propaganda. This is because the entire religious knowledge is scaffold to them which opens their idealism without authentic knowledge of the religion. It provides a way for Muslim societies to incorporate the positive peace constructions and exude moderation by altering educational curricula and media to focus on love and cooperation instead of hate. The media and educational platforms are powerful tools against extremism. This can also include other Muslims shaped by social functions such as community leaders or specialists in religion to elucidate the social role that Islam plays. They need to form practical seminars, workshops and campaigns guided by the important values of Islam which expose to the people the nature is really is. With these collective endeavors, it is possible to preserve the incomparable treasure of Hadith as a the world guiding them to the reality of justice and compassion they give aid to the peace. By resolving Muslim's extremism issue and fostering a-symmetrical understanding of Hadith, it will not only safeguard the trust of Muslim community but also invite for global respect and shall leave an imprint of allies in the world.

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