Reasons for Terrorism in the Middle East

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Abstract

Middle East and terrorism concepts have been mostly used together in terrorism literature and they became as if identical and synonym to each other. Muslim world worldwide confronts a multidimensional crisis such as economic, political, educational, cultural, and social problems. Experts are right to claim that most of the radical terrorist groups stem from this region and terrorism is not only the consequence of these factors. Therefore, in this study, we approached the root causes of terrorism with an historic example of the first terrorist movement in this region, Kharijites because it is necessary to understand the religious and ideological factors of radical groups which misinterpreted the religion and spread this twisted ideology. History is repeating itself by Kharijites in the seventh century and the Neo Kharijism represented by ISIS in the 21st century. Then we continued with the chronic problems of this region such as authoritarian regimes, education, unemployment and poverty which are easily manipulated by radical terrorist organizations. To end radical influence on youth, we recommended that real approach of religion towards violence and radicalization should be promoted by mainstream Muslims and human rights and democratic values should be nurtured in educational curricula.

*Keyword*s**: Radicalism, Neo Kharijism, ISIS, Salafism, Collective identity

Introduction

Debates over the root causes of terrorism and radicalism in the Middle East is a complex and multifaceted issue. Relating terrorist activities to social, political, economic, religious, and cultural factors is profoundly complex. Some scholars focus on the counter-intelligence and coercive action against terrorism and radicalization in the Middle East while some scholars focus on educational, social, and educational empowerment to stop radicalization and terrorism recruitment in this region (Taspinar, 2009). Therefore, in order to combat terrorism in the Middle East, it is crucial to understand the causes of terrorism.

Terrorist attacks towards Turkish Embassy in Somalia, mall attack in Nairobi, a church in Pakistan, Shiite mosque in Iraq, and several attacks towards civilians in this region tell us that different interpretation of the religion plays a big role in these terrorist attacks because terrorists claimed that they conducted these attacks on behalf of Islamic law or Islam against non-Muslims or even Muslims whom they do not perceive as real Muslims. It is interesting that these new radical terrorists called as *Neo Kharijites* not only target non-Muslims but also target other Muslims whom they declare as *tekfir (non-believers)* and legitimate killing Muslims (Akyol, 2013). We chose this movement as the source of the terrorism in the Middle East because they are considered as the first terrorist movement and the most radical stream in the Middle East in the 7th century whose influence are seen now in the ideologies of ISIS, Al Qaeda, and Boko

Haram terrorist organizations.

Social, economic, and educational circumstances of Middle Eastern countries is not adequate for preventing young people from radicalization and terrorism recruitment. However, these circumstances do not lead every young people to join terrorist organizations. Ideological and political factors play an important role in the region for joining terrorist organizations. Radicalism concept perfectly reflects both political and ideological conditions and the mindset of people who are vulnerable to join terrorist organizations. In order to fight against terrorism, politicians, experts, and scholars should focus on radicalism. We know that not every radical turn into terrorist, however they are more vulnerable people to join terrorist organizations. Therefore, early measures can be taken for not to take coercive measures (Taspinar, 2009). Radicalism can find its sympathizers and support and act of terrorism can be admired within these radicals. Terrorist acts can be seen as legitimate and there can be implicit support for it.

In terms of ideological motives, dying as a 'martyr', fighting against infidel enemy, protecting Muslim fellows, living in accordance with the teaching of Islam where fighting and dying is mostly emphasized, trying to get cleaned immediately from their past sins, young people get easily attracted to radical discourses. These young people's religious knowledge is rudimentary and they only learn what they are told. Fundamental strength of radical groups is the misinterpretation of Islam in terms of their ideology. Along with contradictory facts with Islam, their misinterpretation of Islam attracts young people not only for faithful or ideological promises such as being martyr but also promises for life enjoyments such as women and money. As seen in ISIS example, ISIS terrorists are paid salary in dollar currency and women hostages are given to them as gift.

For psychological motives of Arabs in the Middle East, we can say that young Arabs may perceive joining terrorist organizations to respond Western humiliation against Arab world because Arab world was exposed to continuous humiliation. For example, situation in Palestine, handing over territories to Israel, first Iraq invasion and killing more than 100.000 Arabs during this invasion; maltreatment of Arab convicts in Abu Gharib prison during second Iraq's occupation not only humiliated Arab world but also took their self-confidence. For instance, Gunter (2015) stated that US coalition prisons became a recruitment center for ISIS members. Arab world did not unify or cooperate. At the end, Arab people felt desperate because their governments were not strong enough to cooperate or unify against Israel or Western countries and there was nobody to take stance against these actions (Laçiner, 2009).

Ayubi, Hashemi and Qureshi (2015) have made a recent entry to the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* on Islamic State in which they have explained the notion of Islamic State beginning from the rise of Islam, then explained the juridical theory of the Islamic State, by following the explanation of the modern ideological contributors to the establishment of Islamic State ending the study by an analysis of contemporary Islamic States and their ideological bases. For instance, ISIS persuades its new recruits with its radical ideology. In fact, religion and ideology is the most important and attractive factors among justifications and reasons of terrorist attack. That is, existence of different selective misinterpretations of specific verses of Quran enables radical groups to pursue their political and ideological goals. ISIS is a continuity of

kharijism and that is why it was called as neo kharijites that is explained below.

1. (Neo) Kharijism

Neo Kharijism that is the reflection of the Kharijism in the first period of Islam, can be seen as the most important source of terrorism in the Middle East. Similar to the Kharijites in the past, the current representatives of them; such as, Al Qaeda, Al Nusra, and ISIS terrorist organizations interpret the Quran according to their own ideas, as well. Then, they brutally slaughter the people who are mostly Muslim since they do not see them as Muslims.

Kharijites are former Muslim group which turned against 4th Caliphate Ali after the battle of Siffin in the seventh century. At this battle, Ali agreed to make peace with Muaviye to end political dispute between them through arbitration and both sides agreed on stopping the war. However, over six thousand men from the camp of Ali broke away because they claimed that the arbitration was against the Quran principles and the leader of this group accused Ali as non-Muslim for this reason. They claimed that arbitration by men was rejecting Quran and the problem should have been solved by Quran. They threatened to kill Ali. Six thousand men merged away after this incident and that is why they called as 'kharijites' which means breaking away, merging away, leaving, exited. Their slogan was 'Islamic order in the world' which is the same slogan of today's ISIS. They were the first group, cult, sect which broke away with different understanding of Islam. Kharijites saw themselves as the sole representative of the Islam and the right. They easily used to claim the Muslims who did not think like them as infidels. Then, they used to feel justified in confiscating the properties of Muslims and murder of them (Ünsal, 2015). A rigid, intolerant, far from understanding the spirit of the religious, and alienating understanding prevailed in Kharijism (Kennedy, 2006; Ünal, 2014; Ünsal, 2015). Kharijites used to interpret Quran ayahs (verses) according to their own views. They were an extremist and radical group. The uprisings of Kharijites starting during Caliph Ali Period continued both under the Umayyads. They generally were suppressed under the Abbasids. After the Abbasids, Kharijites did not show any significant presence (Ünsal, 2015).

The first followers of and sympathizers of *Kharijites* came from displeased, dissatisfied youth, slaves, and marginalized people in the 7th century (Foss, 2007) and it is not surprising that displeased youth in the Middle East and in Western countries is joining ISIS as youth joined Kharijites in the past. They propose that only salvation of Muslims is to go back to the teachings of Quran (but as interpreted by themselves) and *Sunnah*. However, their actions are direct opposition to their objective.

This group of people was described by Prophet Mohammed in his several hadiths. In these hadiths, Prophet Mohammad not only predicted the emergence of Kharijites but also he called on Muslims to eliminate them (Kenney, 2006). One of these hadiths was, "They recite the Quran but it will never pass their throat (which means that they will not comprehend the Quran, they will not take it pass their throats and into their hearts). They appear to be Muslim but they stray from Islam as an arrow strays from the animal at which it is shot. If I were alive when this group comes, I shall destroy them like Allah destroyed *Ad* and *Semud* people (ancient cities of people mentioned in Quran). They are the worst of the creation. Those who fight against them and who

oppose them are close to the book of Allah". In this hadith we learn a prediction that there will be groups stemming from Islamic world who are Muslims, recite Quran very well but have nothing to do with the real teachings of Islam. One of the hadits about (neo) kharijites was that, "There will be many differences in my *Ummah* (Islamic world) but there will be only one group whose speech is often flowery but their actions are very terrible and have nothing to do with Islamic principles". Another hadiths tells us, "Towards the end of time, there will be a group of young foolish men with foolish dreams, overzealous individuals. They will say good things but their belief and faith will not go beyond their throats and they will go out from their religion as an arrow passes through an animal. You will think your prayer is nothing when you look at their prayers. You will think your religiosity is nothing when you look at their religiosity. You will think your reciting Quran is nothing when you look at their reciting Quran. However, they have nothing to do with me. These people are the worst of my Umma. Those who kill them (gets rid of them) are the best of my Umma and shall be rewarded on the day of resurrection". As mentioned above this group was described as the worst creation of his Umma by Prophet Mohammed before they emerged.

From these hadiths, Kharijites were described by Islamic scholars with explaining their signs. The first sign is that they will raise very popular appealing Islamic slogans that will mostly appealing common youth. They were described as their words were right but their intentions were wrong. They used the Islamic slogans to mislead people. The second sign of this group is that they are extremely religious. They will have shaving head and bulky beard. The third sign of this group is they will brainwash young people. They use specific hadiths and Quran verses which are misinterpreted to brainwash youth. Another sign is that they will appear towards to the end of the time. They will appear from the East and they will emerge more than twenty times throughout the history (Ünsal, 2015).

1.1. The characteristics of Kharijites

One of the most important characteristics of the Kharijites is that if a Muslim does not support their views about the interpretation of any ayah or hadith, he used to firstly be declared as an infidel (Ünsal, 2015). Then, they used to feel justified in confiscating the properties of that Muslim and killing of him. Because of their heretical thoughts many innocent Muslims were brutally slaughtered. This was also a reason to revolt the authorities and states. It used to be seen as a pillar of their faith. They were so violent that they added one more pillar (jihad) to the five basic pillars of Islam. Moreover, they did not differentiate between civilian and combatants in their fight as ISIS and Al Qaeda. In Islamic law, civilians must not get hurt in battles. However, *Kharijites* not only killed civilian men but they also killed women, children and even infants and it was legitimate for their twisted ideology to kill them all. However, violence against noncombatants such as women, clergy, and children is prohibited by the Islamic teachings and according to Quran, "One such principle is that taking the life of a single innocent is a crime against all humanity (Akyol, 2000; Canan, 1995). Neo Kharijites have the same ideology with former Kharijites because they have the methodology of black and white world which means that Muslims are with them or against them. Anyone who does not share this ideology or criticize them is automatically threatened. They are the first group of Muslims who used excommunication process against other Muslim communities. If a Muslim commits sin, it is then

justifiable to excommunicate who does not share their way of belief. It is legitimate for them to fight and kill Muslim sinners (Ünsal, 2015). In fact, Kharijites did not use to interpret the Quran, instead, they used to try to confirm and justify their own views and rights by using the verses of the Quran (Ünsal, 2015). While they did not tolerate the slightest sin of any Muslim, some Khariji groups could tolerate the sins of their supporters. However, most of them declared their supporters to be unbelievers when they committed a sin.

Demagogy and forcibly imposing their own views were some of the most favorite behaviors of them (Ünsal, 2015). During any argument, they did not use to accept any opposite thought even people submitted evidence from Quran or hadith. Due to these characteristics of Kharijites, Caliph Ali used to give examples from the Prophet Muhammad's practices instead of telling the verses or hadiths during any discussion with Kharijites.

In the first period of them, Kharijites used to recite Quran and pray but they could not internalize and understand the Quran correctly (Ünsal, 2015). They were sanctimonious and fanatical people. They used to despise other Muslims. Their rigid understanding of verses led them to declare other Muslims to be infidels. They murdered the fourth Caliphate Ali with a poisonous sword, assassinated but failed to kill several leaders in the society, friends of Prophet Mohammed and swear to kill all Muslim who do not think like themselves and who do not obey to believe according to their belief (Akyol, 2014). Al Qaeda, ISIS, Boko Haram and like minded terrorist groups all carry on the ideology of Kharijism and that is why they are considered as 'Neo Kharijites' as the new followers of this twisted ideology.

1.2. Is that neo Salafism or neo Kharijism?

It is necessary to tell Salafism since most of the terrorist organizations (not linked to Shi'ism) operated in the Middle East tend to show themselves under the umbrella of Salafism (Ünsal, 2015). Thus, Salafism is used to tell fundamentalist thought. Nonetheless, Salafism is meant to be subject to the Prophet Muhammad and the first three generations of Islam. The origin of Salaffiyyah revived by Ibn Taymiyyah, was far away from terror (Bulaç, 2014; Ünsal, 2015). Salafiyyah thought's root goes back to twelfth century (Ünsal, 2015). Salafism has been revived by Ibn Taymiyyah. Then, it has been formed by ibn Abd Al-Wahhab; thus, this sect is generally referred to as Wahhabi. Nevertheless; many adherents of Salafism do not use Wahhabism when they introduce themselves. Without jihadist Salafis, many of the Salafis are not linked to terrorism.

Tawhid (Unity of God) is one the most sensitive issues handled by the Salafis (Ünal, 2014; Ünsal, 2015). However, their understanding of Unity of Allah (God) differs from other Ahl al-Sunnah thought. For instance, Salafis deny tomb visitations, worshiping at tombs, event worshiping at the tomb of Prophet Mohammad because according to them, these acts are perceived as opposition to the Unity of God. ISIS as the representative of jihadi salafism, destroyed one of the most ancient historical cities in Syria (Palmyra) just because they were the landmarks polytheism for them. ISIS also destroyed tombstones and shrines of descendants of the Prophet Mohammed in this city. ISIS also declared that one of their goals is to destroy Kaaba in Mecca and kill those who worship stones.

According to Salafis, ayahs about Allah (God) are not subject to any interpretations. Salafis do not declare other Muslim scholars who do not think about the attributes of God like them to be infidels but they accuse them to be heresies instead.

Indeed, terrorist organizations claiming adherence to salafism in the Middle East are far away from Salafism revived by Ibn Taymiyyah; however, their thoughts and acts are similar to the Kharijites' views and behaviors instead (Bulaç, 2014; Ünal, 2014; Ünsal, 2015). Today, Salafiyyah has become a common thought linked to Sunni radical groups since some terrorist organizations identified themselves as Salafis. Like Kharijites, they display very intolerant and brutal attitudes toward Muslims and sometimes non-Muslims. They are closed to philosophy and they reject all kinds of different interpretations. They also try to justify their slaughters and suicide bombings by misinterpreting Quran. They do not internalize Quran and do not understand the spirit of Islam (Ünal, 2014; Ünsal, 2015). These Salafi movement fanatics believe that in order to solve the problem that Muslims and Muslim societies face today, strict practices of the earliest Muslims should be practiced (Richards, 2002). They destroy the tombs in the holy places or other holy places. Their declaration other Muslims to be infidels looks alike Kharijites' methods. Similar to Kharijites, they are extremely tough when they were telling Islam and inviting people to Islam. Today, there are many Salafi groups who are not linked to terror as well. They may be doctrinally rigid; nevertheless, they are peaceful. Terrorist organizations claiming that they have Salafiyyah thought should also be separated from the first version of Salafism revived by Ibn Taymiyyah as well because modern Salafis are closer to the Classical Kharijites in terms of their thoughts and acts. Thus, they should be called as Neo Kharijites.

Wahhabism was based on Salafism belief and they interpreted Salafism more strictly in the 18th century. Ottomans struggled against Wahhabi belief however; they lost the control of Saudi Arabia. Wahhabis believe that Sufism is against the Islam. They perceive prominent religious figures such as Mevlana, Abdulqadir Geylani as the enemy of Islam. Anyone who interprets Quran verses is considered as non believer. Wahhabism is a way of spreading Islam with peaceful propaganda as can be seen in Balkans, Europe and Central Asia which is aided by Saudi Arabia. They provide funding to some mosques which can be perceived as Salafi mosques. However, it is also way of jihadism in combat areas (EGM, 2002).

1.3. Neo Khariji terrorist organizations: Al-Qaeda, Al-Nusra and ISIS

Al-Qaeda's organizational structure and doctrine are based on Kharijism and its ideology is based on Salafism and Wahhabism (Bulaç, 2014). In the early period of Salafism thought there were no armed rebellion, terrorism, and killing of innocent civilians. From this point, it would be more appropriate to describe al-Qaeda as a Neo Khariji terrorist organization.

Unlike Kharijites, the founders of Al-Qaeda are not poor and uneducated (Bulaç, 2014). They are well educated, rich and good in using technology. Some of them are former Arab Nationalists, Liberals or even Marxists. They slaughter many people including innocent civilians, Muslims and non-Muslims. They claim they commit these crimes in the name of religion; however, killing innocent human beings are strictly forbidden in Islam (Canan, 1995; Ünal, 2008). Islam bans

killing noncombatants, women, and children even in a war. Their brutal activities cannot be explained by using Islam. Nevertheless, they are trying to justify the slaughter by misinterpreting of Quran and by giving the examples the killings of US and Isreal in some Muslim countries.

Similar to Al-Qaeda, Al-Nusra is a terrorist organization having Salafi ideology but Khariji mentality (Bulaç, 2014; Ünsal, 2015). Al-Nusra operates in Syria as a branch of al-Qaeda. The militants of Al-Nusra massacre the Muslims who don't accept their views after they declared them to be infidels. They also confiscate their properties. They claim their own views as they are the orders of Islam.

ISIS is the last may be not the least representative of Neo Khariji thought (Bulaç, 2014; Ünsal, 2015). Like Al-Nusra, ISIS has emerged as a brunch of Al-Qaeda operating in Iraq and Syria. It is one of the most brutal and bloody terrorist organizations in the World. Al-Qaeda's current leader Ayman Zawahiri declared that, ISIS's founder Sheikh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced ISIS's foundation without their knowledge (Ünsal, 2015). Then, he declared that ISIS would only operate in Iraq. However, Baghdadi did not obey Zawahiri's order, like Kharijites did in the past. Baghdadi claimed that it was the order of God. The presence of many independent extremist groups in Syria stems from the Salafi approach based on Kharijism. ISIS accepts non-Muslim militants while the other Al-Qaeda groups reject it. ISIS justifies acceptance of non-Muslims by claiming that they need more warriors since they fight at many fronts. Although ISIS claimed that Shia is the enemy of them and their goal is to overthrown Assad, without minor skirmishes, they did not ever fight with Shia or Assad forces. However, ISIS fights against Free Syrian Army, Al- Nusra, PYD (the Syrian branch of the PKK) and Peshmerga. Almost all of the victims of ISIS slaughters are Muslims. ISIS militants are very intolerant against the Muslims who do not support them and accept their views. They declare the Muslims who do not accept their views to be infidels. Then they slaughter those Muslims and confiscate their properties as the Kharijites did in the past. The executions of non-Muslims are used to attract new militants especially among marginalized, uneducated, and radical youth by ISIS.

Although none of these terrorist organizations do not have the Islamic characteristics, such as; peace, brotherhood, tolerance, and forgiveness; they claim they do everything in the name of religion. All of them are far away from the spirit of Islam. They only try to justify the results of their own views by misinterpreting verses and hadiths.

2. Political, economic, and educational circumstances in the Middle East

Middle Eastern people live in situations where literacy rate is low; inequality between men and women in many services is high; human right violations are permanent; rule of law is not accepted, and dictatorships are present in most of the countries (Onat, 2004). Relative deprivation is very high in the Middle East because globalization created awareness about opportunities in the minds of people. However, people now are aware about opportunities which they do not have access to them. Or they do not have right to have those opportunities due to weak states' capacities. These circumstances created frustration, humiliation, and victimization among Middle Eastern people who are mostly undereducated, underemployed and unemployed. Moreover, young Muslims learn about the modern life in Western countries and they are caught

between their strict religious tradition which is imposed by political Islamic parties and Western modernity (Taspinar, 2009).

There are many factors which breed terrorism such as social, psychological, political, economic, and cultural. When these factors come together, terrorist organizations can easily recruit young people. In this regard, we will mostly mention fight against terrorism not fight against terror in the Middle East. Fighting against terrorism or radicalism needs maintaining social, educational, economic needs and empowering human development in that region. At the same time fight against terrorists can be implemented. However, the important part of this struggle is against terrorism and radicalism because security-oriented policies and operations against terrorists do not end terrorism (Laçiner, 2009, 2013).

Poverty, ignorance, unemployment, and authoritarian regimes are the most prominent problems in the Middle East region for their effect on people's involvement in radical groups. These factors are important because Neo Kharijites manipulate these chronic problems of the Islamic world and they claim that they are the defenders of truth, pure representatives of justice, fighters of the way of God, and deceive youth with the idea of jihad, bravery, carrying on God's will, challenging Western countries which exploit Muslim world. They can only attract youth who do not have true background of Islam and who are dissatisfied and displeased with the current situation of their homeland and Islam world (Foss, 2007; Ünsal, 2015). These factors are easily manipulated in order to attract youth. We do not claim that these factors are directly associated with joining terrorist organizations. Instead we believe that these circumstances in the Middle East may have effect on people choice to accept radical ideologies as the only way to respond deficiencies in the region. These factors are explained briefly below.

2.1. Authoritarian regimes in the Middle East

Hegemony means the power of one state over other states. In global perspective it also means controlling economic, cultural and political power and supremacy in global scale. Therefore, hegemonic state has global power over other states and the main concern of this state is to sustain its power and global order. Hegemonic state also had power in international organizations and can direct these organizations according to its global interests (Gozen, 2004; Aktutun, 2004). In this respect, the U.S. is considered as a hegemonic state in the eyes of Middle Eastern people which cause instability in that region by supporting authoritarian regimes in this region.

US foreign policy towards Middle East was mostly criticized for the support of Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes. Main purpose of the presence of US military in this region is to access and control energy resources in this region. Therefore, supporting these regimes meant stability in the region. That is, repression of freedom of speech and human rights in these Middle Eastern countries prevented uncontrolled rise against US interest in the region. People living in these countries blame US for their undemocratic circumstances which curtail equal opportunities and human rights for average people. Therefore, considering repressive conditions of these countries, there is less chance for any democratization efforts. However, support for authoritarian regimes caused a wave of religious extremism in which people found different interpretations of Islam to react against dissatisfaction, distrust against US presence (Barzegar, 2005). Support of these

corrupt, secular dictatorial regimes paved the way for radical groups as the only alternative to the people who want to oppose these regimes. Moreover, uncertainty in the Middle East region is misused by the ISIS members towards their advance (Gunter, 2015). Due to inadequate social and economic services within the Muslim states, some Islamic groups who favor radicalism and have political agenda provide education, health, and social services in these areas and Muslims feel sympathy towards them. At the end, political Islam that is favored by radical groups "slowly evolves into a resistance movement against injustice, state oppression, and western support for repressive regimes (Taspinar, 2009: p. 79). That is why ISIS declared the rise of caliphate as the only way for the salvation of Muslims from political chaos. ISIS declared that all rulers in Islamic countries are unbelievers and it is legitimate for them to fight against political leaders and whole nations to force them to join their organization.

2.2. Arab-Israel conflict in the region

US foreign policy always supported Israel against other Middle Eastern countries and favored Israel's interest against Arab countries and Palestine. Financial, diplomatic and military support of Israel against Arab countries created resentment, humiliation, and hate in these countries (Barzegar, 2005). It is interesting that although the Palestinian problem is the most prominent and manipulated problem in the region, majority or all of the terrorist attacks were against Muslims or some Christians or other religious and ethnic groups in the region. ISIS only launched rocket from Egypt's soil to Israel which did not cause any damage. Formerly Al Qaeda affiliated terrorist organization Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis has declared and pledged alliance to the ISIS took the responsibility for this rocket fire (Melman, 2015). Spokesperson of the ISIS, Nidal Nuseiri has stated that although the group's central idea was destruction of Israel state, they had to fulfill six specific stages first before taking Israel. He also stated that before taking Israel, they had to weaken US both economically and politically via attacks in American soil and US interests in the Middle East (Halevi & Soffer, 2014). Moreover, ISIS shared a message via twitter that they did not take order from God to kill Jewish people. Their priority was to fight against close enemy. This close enemy was hypocrite *(munafik)* and God ordered to fight against these hypocrites because they are more dangerous than infidels (Sabah, 2015). Most of the religious based terrorist organizations' primary enemy was Israel. They were attracting their followers with this discourse. However, from their discourses, it is evident that the most prominent enemy for ISIS is other Muslims because neo kharijism mostly targets other Muslims for not believing like themselves. Therefore, Arab-Israel conflict is not a useful discourse for ISIS to recruit youth unlike other radical terrorist organizations.

2.3. Poverty in the Middle East

Despite the increase in educational attainment in Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries, per capita economic growth in the region over the past 20 years had been relatively low. Compared to other countries of developing world, Middle Eastern and North African countries collectively have relatively limited poverty. The unemployment rate is quite high and will probably worsen because governments are not able to provide the necessary jobs. Unemployment and low wages eventually affected young generation in the region whose anger was fueled for political unrest (World Bank, 2007). Moreover, Richards (2002) stated that "the

unemployment rate problem is the most volatile economic issue facing the Middle East. It encourages many relatively educated, young, urban residents to support radical Islamic political movements" (p. 31).

There has been debate on the relationship between poverty and terrorism. Some assert that poverty directly lead to terrorism while some claim that poverty contributes to terrorism by supporting terrorist activities and politically motivated violence (Krueger &Maleckova, 2002). It is evident that socioeconomic instability and deficiency create anger and unhappiness and these factors may direct those people to join terrorist organizations in the Middle East; however, it is not enough to link causation of terrorism to poverty. Poverty, unemployment and despair breed joining terrorist organizations (Stiglitz, 2002). In terms of economic integration in the world market, Middle Eastern region is the least successful in the world (Laçiner, 2009). In this regard, it is mostly emphasized that terrorism is a response to political conditions and frustration which is powered by low economic conditions (Krueger &Maleckova, 2002).

Sociologists assert that absolute economic deprivation does not lead people to joining terrorist organizations but relative economic deprivation does. That is, people may think that why some people have everything and live in wealth and why they do not have these opportunities. This type of thinking may lead to social deviance easily and joining terrorist organizations (Ozerkmen, 2004). These kinds of people may easily be drawn into terrorist organizations to take revenge and fulfill their expectations. For instance, ISIS terrorists who were responsible for Diyarbakir and Suruc blasts in Turkey in which almost 50 people died came from poor families from one of the Southeastern provinces (Adiyaman) in Turkey. Experts warned that almost 200 young people from Adiyaman between 17 and 25 years old joined ISIS terrorist organization. Adiyaman is one of the least developed provinces in Turkey and young people suffer from unemployment. It is found that ISIS is giving salary to those new recruits and promising to continue. Therefore, earning money is one of the reasons for joining ISIS in Turkey (Ibrahimoglu & Yazicioglu, 2015). A congressman, Umut Oran from Republican People's Party prepared a report about why young people from Adiyaman are joining ISIS. The most prominent factors are explained below:

- ISIS is giving almost $6000 to young unemployed people and imposing its political and religious agenda. Then, it continues to give $1200 each month.
- Due to high rate of unemployment in the city (one of the five cities which had the highest unemployment rate), many cafes became overcrowded and these places became the target of ISIS to recruit these frustrated young people (CNNTURK, 2015).

As criminologists pointed out committing violent acts was overwhelmingly a youth phenomenon. Similarly, resort to join radical organizations, adopting radical discourses is overwhelmingly phenomenon of youth who are unemployed, underemployed and had little education opportunities who gathered for political and ideological fulfillment of their radical goals (Richards, 2002).

2.4. Ignorance in the Middle East

Like poverty, ignorance in the Middle East also provides a breeding ground for radicalization in the Middle East (Taspinar, 2009). According to the World Bank report, despite the investments and some related educational developments in the Middle Eastern and North African countries, the educational achievements of these countries remained below than other countries which are at similar levels of economic development. MENA countries are still quite behind than other similar countries in terms of secondary and higher education enrollment, distribution of educational attainment, and average number of years of schooling. Moreover, literacy rates are still quite below than those similar countries. Illiteracy rate is twice as high as in East Asia and Latin America. Distribution of education is becoming less equal over years (World Bank, 2007).

As stated above, ignorance in the Middle East can be seen as a factor which drives young people to join radical groups. However, there is a growing number of educated young people who favor radical groups and coming from middle class. However, these young people have less employment opportunities and most of them are unemployed. They cannot express themselves, their expectations in political world due to repressive regimes of their countries. Radical groups who have political agenda can be gateways for young, educated, unemployed, and frustrated young people (Taspinar, 2009).

Relationship between education level and engagement in terrorist activities is a controversial issue. Krueger &Maleckova (2002) examined the determinants of participation in Hezbollah in Lebanon and they found that education and poverty was not statistically signifant predictors of whether people become martyrs for Hezbollah. This finding was also congruent with Palestinian suicide bombers. They were educated and coming from average income families. 27 Israeli Jews who were responsible for planting bombs and assassination of Palestinian mayors in the early 1980s in the Occupied Territories also came from well-paying occupations and they were well educated. Moreover, according to the survey on Palestinian people about whether they approve and support attacks on Israeli military and civilian targets, the results showed that they supported terrorist attacks against Israeli targets and the demographics of these people showed that they had higher education and came from higher living circumstances (Krueger &Maleckova, 2002).

If ignorance is not a significant predictor of joining terrorist activities in the Middle East, we can question how individuals get influenced by extremist propaganda which drive them into terrorist organizations. This question leads us to radicalization process of individuals in the Middle East.

Considering economic and educational circumstances of the MENA countries, it is clear that youth who are poor, having limited education and having little occupation opportunities or mostly unemployed or had jobs below their expectations and capacity are more willing to join opposition movements in particular radical groups. For instance, the violent radical opposition in Egypt mostly occurred in Upper Egypt The *Sa'id* (Middle and Upper Egypt) which is the poorest region of Egypt. When Sa'idis began to move into large cities, they also brought their radical ideas with them and radicalism became more visible in Egypt's large and developed cities (Richards, 2002).

3. Radicalization in the Middle East and new collective identity

Although globalization created many economic, social, and cultural opportunities it did not spread homogeneously. Radicalization is a long lasting indoctrination process which especially target young people. Therefore, if social politics and investments are not supported, radicalization may be more apparent. Middle Eastern region is plagued by unstable economic, political and social problems and therefore, *neo kharijism* is gathering relatively huge support throughout the Muslim world in a short amount of time (Myers & Stanovsek, 2014; Rodrik, 1998). With the developments in technology, people have better and fast access to worldwide changes and developments. Therefore, people in underdeveloped regions can compare their situations with people living other developed regions which increase their expectations that may never be met (Kennedy, 1995). German writer Gunter Grass pointed out that in a new world order there is no place for third world countries. He said that powerful countries declared war against terrorism however terrorism which stem from Middle East is the output of anger which turned into grudge of people toward the dominant and arrogant attitude of Western countries in particular the U.S. (Giddens, 2000).

Taylor and Whitter (1992: p. 105) examined the collective identity in social movement communities. According to these authors, collective identity means renaming of the group by group members in terms of their common interest, experiences, and ties. Group members' own identity is reshaped within the group identity (Friedman & McAdam, 1992: p. 157). Young and Sun (2003: pp. 208-209) assert that collective identity is developed by comparing themselves with "other". Terrorism activities regarding collective identity is perceived as close to the hate crimes because in hate crimes the target is selected not due to the individual behavior but his or her group identity. Hate crimes target some members of religion, racial or ethnic groups in which economic deprivation was a crucial determinant (Fearon & Laitin, 2002). Moreover, in both hate crimes and terror activities, the aim is to wreak terror in a wider public than those directly affected (Krueger &Maleckova, 2002). There are some facts which create collective identity. These are explained below.

3.1. Feel of injustice

Klandermans (1997: p.17) states that if there is a big gap between the expectations of people and what they have it creates anger. This situation is mostly observed in underdeveloped countries. New changes and development cannot be followed by the agencies and institutions in these countries and expectations of the people cannot be fulfilled (Skocpol, 2004). Due to imbalanced globalization, gap between developed and undeveloped countries widened and people living in undeveloped countries felt injustice due to economic deprivation. Western countries are wealthier and more developed compared to Muslim countries and Western countries can easily impose their cultural and social values to people in underdeveloped Muslim countries. Therefore, people in Muslim countries felt themselves as defeated against Western countries due to not being equal to them. That feeling breeds injustice among these people (Hungtinton, 1968; Yegenoglu, 1996: pp. 115-116). Parallel to this argument, Taspinar (2009) stated that "Such radicalized societies are permeated by a deep sense of collective frustration, humiliation, and deprivation relative to expectations. This radicalized social habitat is easily exploited by terrorists" (p. 77). In short, not only people of Middle Eastern countries but also Muslims from all over the world thought that the West is not treating Muslims justly (Laçiner, 2009).

3.2. Responsible for injustice

When feel of injustice occurs among people living in deprived regions, they should blame the "other" which should be too different than them. Anger toward the "other" creates collective identity. This "other" may be a country, ethnic group or religious group. That creates us versus them feeling (Taylor & Whitter, 1992). When we think about the 9/11 targets, we can consider that terrorism targeted the imbalanced globalization represented by twin towers and the American intervention in Middle East represented by Pentagon. Western world was perceived as responsible for injustice (Laçiner, 2009). However, today's radicalization does not only target Western people or values. Instead they also target Muslims whom they perceive as not real Muslims as hypocrites (*munafik*).

3.3. Consciousness which creates collective identity

The concept of consciousness represents the group's purposes and the actions. Consciousness is transmitted to the group members through media, internet, or some places for religious gatherings (Taylor & Whitter, 1992). If other's way of action includes violence, the collective consciousness will approve the way of response in violent ways. People sharing collective consciousness believe that they can only change their deprived situation by violent actions. This will bring collective actions which will in turn increase the strength of collective consciousness. Terror incidents may be considered as collective actions of these people (Wedel, 2001). People who are under radical influence hold different perceptions, conceptions, constructions, and justifications for terrorist attacks which generate consciousness.

Societies which adopt violent repertories frames, scripts, and fundamentalist ideologies consequently become more likely to use violent means to pursuit their ideological and political goals. Repertories, frames and scripts are broadly studied concepts in criminological and sociological studies which is congruent with terrorism studies. For instance, Harding (2007) broadly explained repertoire, frame, and script concepts in which he draws from previous studies as cultural concepts. The first cultural concept is repertoire where culture is seen as a tool kit of symbols, stories, worldviews in which people use them to solve their problems or pursue their ideological and political goals. In other words, they are people's own beliefs, norms, and values. It is not a unified system but is a repertoire from which to draw. This tool kit is not only result from individual interaction or beliefs but also from the culture through institutions such as school or media. Radical groups' ideologies have been publicized widely over the internet. The propaganda some of which are composed of videos and stories are widely shared over the internet and some other social platforms such as Skype, Ask.fm, Instagram, Tumblr and Kik by radical groups to attract and allure the youth not only from Middle Eastern region but also from all over the world. Misinterpretation of Islam, Neo Kharijism created new repertories for people which enabled and legitimized their violent behaviors against not only non-Muslims but also Muslims whom they believe that these 'other' Muslims are not true believers and are hypocrites and therefore can be killed (Ünsal, 2015). These neo Kharijities go to certain mosques or masjids where they learn and share their misinterpreted Quran verses. In these places, people who are exposed to radical ideology may turn into terrorists due to group radicalization where strong

group pressure is exerted by group members and being martyr is idealized.

Frames and scripts were measured as two types of cultural objects in individual's or group's repertoire. Frame serves as lens for individuals in which they interpret events and therefore impacts how individuals react. They may allow cultural heterogeneity as well as repertoires. Individuals may have several contradictory frames that they may deploy in different situations (Harding, 2007). However, in radicalized groups, their point of views is almost the same due to sharing same radical values. Their interpretation and perception of 'other' is based on elimination or control of 'other'. Scripts provide cultural templates for the sequencing behaviors or actions over time (Harding, 2007). They show how to solve problems and achieve goals. Scripts in radicalized groups perceive violence as the elimination of 'other'. For instance, Hegghammer (2006) examined the profile of 240 Saudi Arabian militants. Most of them were dead and some of them were apprehended and were in high security prisons. He stated that most of these militants came from regions that are socially or religiously conservative. They had also gone to Afghanistan to have training in Al Qaeda camps for at least two years. One of the interesting finding was that more than half of the militants came from Riyadh before they joined terrorist organization where high profile radical ideologues such as Nasir al-Fahd created the extremist community in this city. Saudi Arabia is the center for Wahhabi belief which can be considered as different interpretation of Islam and this belief is the official ideology of Saudi Arabia which is spread to other regions of the world with the help of oil-rich country, Saudi Arabia. *Neo Kharijites* mostly came from Wahhabi belief (Laçiner, 2013). These kinds of places are best places where repertoires, frames, and scripts are can be spread easily.

3.4. Collective identity regarding joining ISIS in Iraq and Syria

Since the war in Syria broke out in 2011, thousands of young people came to Syria and Iraq to fight. Young people from different countries came to the region to fight for Islamic State which attracted many young people for its cause. Most of the young people came from Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, and Morocco to fight for ISIS. Around 5000 Tunisians came to the region while 5000 more were stopped from leaving the country. 8000 ISIS members came from Egypt, 2500 members came from Saudi Arabia, 1500 members came from Morocco, 1500 members came from Jordan, and 1700 came from Turkey. These countries are known for their undemocratic situation, poverty among citizens and repressive regimes. Moreover, the reason for joining ISIS from these countries is mostly for ideological and political reasons (Kirk, 2015).

There are also 2500 foreign young members of the terrorist organization came from Western countries such as the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand (Kirk, 2015). The reason for coming from almost 81 countries to fight for ISIS is that their faith. That is, they believe that it is their religious obligation to protect fellow Muslims from enemy. They also want to take part in a battle against 'infidel' enemy and dying as a 'martyr' (Barrett, 2014). This belief is transmitted as propaganda through internet and in some praying places by extremist religious pundits.
One of the most fundamental features of radical terrorist groups which have Salafi discourse such as ISIS is the exclusionist attitude towards other Muslims. For instance, ISIS declared

Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood as non-Muslims. Considering the declarations of ISIS through their website, it is evident that they mostly emphasized the polytheism and targeted other Muslims (Bicer, 2015).

Conclusion

It is important to examine and explore the root causes of terrorism in particular radicalism in this region. That is, lack of socio-economic integration of Muslim societies to the conventional society, learning radical discourses process in a context of social structure, interaction among these people which produces radical violent behavior and justify certain behavior due to misinterpretation of religious thoughts are assumed that they are congruent with the radicalization process. Therefore, we may have better understanding of the context of these people in which radicalization occur.

Muslim world worldwide confronts a multidimensional crisis such as economic, political, educational, cultural, and social problems. Terrorism is only an output of these intertwined problems. Middle Eastern countries are repressive and do not enable democratization for their people. Human rights and rule of law are not evident. Economic conditions depend on oil not based on industry and the economy of these countries is less integrated into global economy. Globalization of communication contributed to the spread of radicalism over the Middle Eastern countries and other parts of the world even Western countries. Authoritarian regimes in this region also failed to manage and engage successfully process of globalization (Laçiner, 2009; Richards, 2002). There is hardly anything which can be taken as an example from these Middle Eastern countries for people around other parts of the world. Overall, as Richards (2002) stated "Today's Middle East finds itself mired in the modernization process" (p. 23) and radicals perceive only solution by restoration of circumstances of the seventh century Arabia. In order to realize this imagination, they believe in radical terrorist organizations' religious rhetoric. Real approach of religion towards violence and radicalization should be promoted by mainstream Muslims in order to counter terrorist approaches and prevent misinterpretation and misuse of religion. Islamic scholars from all over the world should gather and develop strategies against the ideology of Neo Kharijism and denounce terrorism and violence in general. As Obama stated, ISIS was a cancer and it had no place in the 21st century and therefore, all Muslims should join to combat this 'cancer'.

In order to fight against radicalization in the Middle East, motives that drive people into joining terrorist organizations should be explored. Western countries supported repressive regimes in the Middle East for their national interests therefore; these repressive regimes did not provide democratic system for their citizens. These people had to live in an anti democratic country where rule of law and human rights are not supported. People did not have many opportunities to look for their rights in democratic ways because they were forbidden. Therefore, these people were easily targeted by radical groups because joining radical groups and sharing their values was only way for taking revenge from countries which support their repressive countries. Radical groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS have universal ideology which aim withdrawing American forces from Middle East and stop American support to Israel. Therefore, Western countries in particular should revise its foreign relations with repressive regimes in the Middle East and

should help these countries to develop human rights of their citizens (Guven, 2004: p.1; FPIF Report, 2001: pp.5-6). Human rights and education should be promoted as the most basic of Islamic values. Human rights and education has reciprocal relationship. That is, in educational curricula, human rights and democratic values should be nurtured. While most of the region's youth are under the influence of unqualified radical figures that have radical religious rhetoric, religious education is a vital in order to eradicate these twisted ideologies. Laçiner (2009) pointed out, "a struggle approach lacking in social, economic, political dimensions is in fact not a struggle, but it delays and deepens the problem".

In order to break the terrorist recruitment cycle, extensive research should be conducted on radicalization process which target vulnerable people recruitment process, methods of deception and the tools that are used for attracting and motivating prospective candidates. Understanding terrorists' mindset, their environment, family backgrounds, peers is equally important factors to fight against radicalism in that region. Research on these topics will enable us to better understand the circumstances of individuals' motivations, their mindset which in turn helps us to create policies to solve this problem.

There should be research on exploring pathways to radicalization and radicalization process. This will help to policy makers to develop and implement intervention and prevention programs at the community level to eradicate radicalization and terrorism in the long turn.

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