Exploring the Role of Islamic Asceticism in De-radicalisation Milieu

By
Shehu Abdur-Rahman Aboki
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto

Abstract

Asceticism which is a lifestyle characterized by abstinence from sensual pleasures, often for the purpose of pursuing spiritual goals is expected to reflect the life of every believer. Meanwhile, Allah (SWT) encourages believers to pursue both mundane and spiritual goals but that the spiritual pursuit is far more beneficial than the ephemeral worldly gains. It is in the pursuit of material world that people grew to revolution with extreme ideologies which are offshoots of radicalisation. The other side of the coin is moderation which tilts more towards asceticism. This paper thrusts on the contention between pursuance of material pleasures and concentration upon spiritual matters. This requires people with extreme views to adopt more moderate positions on political or social issues termed de-radicalisation, through embracing the practice of asceticism. The paper acknowledges that though there is a consistent contest between material and spiritual parlance, an ascetic lifestyle can be used to plan de-radicalisation of extremists for peaceful co-existence. It is recommended that the process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases, to then participate in terrorist activity must be curtailed through activities of genuine and practicing Muslim scholars and teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies at all levels of educational institutions. Emphasis must be placed on de-emphasizing material pursuits for spiritual salvation and living an ascetic moderate lifestyle.

Key Words: De-radicalisation, Islam, Asceticism, Exploring

1. Introduction

Islam as a complete and comprehensive system of life is critically concerned about peace and security in the society, whether homogenous or heterogeneous, religious or political. It preaches tolerance in all ramifications especially if the other party yields towards peaceful coexistence. The Madinan charter is a glaring testimony.[1] *Al-Qur'an* calls our attention to peace and tolerance with those whom we interact:

---

1. The Madinan Charter is a document of agreement between Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and Muslims on one hand and on the other non-Muslims and various clans or tribes of Madinah for peaceful co-existence. The agreement was made in the year the Prophet (S.A.W) arrived Madinah on migration from Makkah.

> As for those of the unbelievers as do not fight against you on account of your faith, and neither drive you forth from your home lands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for verily, God loves those who act equitably.[2]

Since asceticism implies the making of peace with Allah and living a life to His glory and pleasure, it will not be difficult to leave peacefully with others. What brings about radical ideologies that blossom into intolerance, extreme views and finally to terrorism are not unconnected with dissatisfaction and unjust teachings by individuals or groups. This paper therefore believes that the ideals of Islamic asceticism can adequately provide the atmosphere to deradicalize those who are considered radical and violent extremists or terrorists.

Radicalization from the perspective of this paper entails an escalation process leading to violence. This being the case, an enmity deposited towards certain social groups or societal institutions and structure could be triggered by intense views resulting from dissatisfaction and negative perception of others. This could be characterized by misguiding, suspicion and fear of the unknown. The formation of unacceptable radical positions based on such premises had been condemned in the Glorious Qur'an:

> O you who believe! If a rebellious evil person comes to you with news, verify it, lest you harm people in ignorance, and afterwards you become regretful to what you have done.[3]

The scenario graduates to violent extremism which in the standard reference point of western societies, is a strategic insurgency against western 'core values' like democracy, majority rule with safeguards for minorities, rule of law, pluralism, separation of state and religion, equality before the law, gender equality, freedom of thought and expression[4] to name just a few. This is indicative of the fact that most analysis of radicalization, extremism and terrorism are targeted against activists who hold extreme positions about the west and its values. It must be echoed that some of the western values like equality before the law, rule of law and perhaps gender equality are part and parcel of Islam from the perspective of *Sharī'ah*. It is only some of the values that people contend with and subsequently breed dissatisfaction and discontent. However, Islam condemns extremism and rather recommends moderation in all approaches. It is against this background that the paper explores the role of Islamic mode of renunciation for moderation (*Zuhd*) called asceticism to deradicalize those who already possess radical views in an attempt to reach specific political or ideological objectives.

2.0 Conceptual Analysis

2.1 Asceticism

Asceticism literally connotes "training: or exercise which originally related to physical training required for athletic events.[5] It was its later usage that extended its meaning to rigorous practice used in many major religious traditions in order to attain redemption

---

[2] Qur'an 60:8

[3] Qur'an 49:6

[4] A. P. Schmid, *Radicalisation, De-Radicalization, counter Radicalization: A Conceptual Discussion and literature review*, international centre for counter-terrorism, (ICCT), The Hague, 2013, p.11

[5] Mariam Dictionary.com

and higher spirituality. It involves a life style which reduces material aspects of life to the utmost simplicity and to a minimum in terms of general simple life style. An unnatural asceticism however, covers practices of body mortification and infliction of pain on the self.

From a religious perspective, asceticism is discipline and abstinence in some form and degree and this could be found in almost all religions. In Islam, the Arabic word for asceticism is *Zuhd* which is to remain free of desire from all worldly and physical pleasures, i.e. not to give them any worth and to adorn inner worlds into worship and beautiful dealings with others. As a result, everything other than Allah loses its importance in the heart.

The Prophet (SAW)[6] led the practice of asceticism among his followers. His house was a simple hut with walls of unbaked clay and a thatched roof of palm leavers covered by camel skin. He had separate apartments for his wives, each made of similar materials. His self apartment contained a rope cot, a pillow stuffed with palm leaves, the skin of some animals spread on the floor and a water bag of leather and some weapons. These were all his early belongings, besides a camel, a horse, and an ass and some lands which he had acquired in the latter part of life.[7] Once, a few Companions, noticing the imprint of mattresses, wished to give him a softer bed but politely declined the offer saying:

> What have I to do with worldly things? My connection with the world is like that of a traveler resting for a while underneath the shade of a tree and moving on.[8]

The Prophet (SAW) advised the people to live simple lives. As the virtual King of Arabia, he lived an austere life bordering on privation. *Sayyidatuna* 'Āishah (R.A) said that there was hardly a day in his life when he had two square meals.[9]

One of the most central *Ahadith* of the Prophet (SAW) that connotes Islamic asceticism is reported on the authority of Abu Al-Abbas Sahl bn Sa'ad al-Sa'idi who said:

> A man came to the Prophet (SAW) and said: "O Messenger (SAW) of Allah, direct me to an act which if I do it, (will cause) Allah to love me and people to love me": He (SAW) answered: "Be indifferent to the world and Allah will love you; be indifferent to what people possess and they will love you.[10]

This *Hadith* implied that Allah loves those who renounce this world (*Zuhd*) and they will also be loved by the people in general. This (*Zuhd)* has been emphasized in the Glorious Qur'an where Allah says:

> Brief is the enjoyment of this world whereas the life to come is best for all who are *Muttaqun* or conscious of Allah.[11]

---

[6] SAW means 'may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him'. It is a form of prayer required of every Muslim faithful whenever any of the names and titles of Prophet Muhammad is mentioned. It is the same thing whenever his names or titles are written.

[7] Athar Hussain, The Message of Muhammad (SAW).

[8] Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood.

[9] H. Siddiqi, (1971). *Sahih Muslim*, (Engl. Transl.), Riyadh: 1.1.P.H.

[10] *Ibn* Majah

[11] Qur'an 4:77, see also Qur'an 13:20 and Qur'an 87:16-17

There are several other *Ahadith* where the Prophet (SAW) condemned the habit of begging others for anything, especially money. He was quoted as saying that:

> One should rather cut and carry a bundle of wood on his back than ask somebody who may or may not give him.[12]

Asceticism does not entail forbidding of what is permissible. It is actually entrusting all affairs in Allah (SWT) and believing that trials in the form of calamities, by losing something of this world, are hopes for rewards in the hereafter. The ultimate goal is to strive to become a better Muslim.

Imam Ahmad bn Hambal was once asked whether or not someone who owns a thousand *dinar* (gold) may still remain an ascetic? He replied that he could still be a *Zāhid* if he does not rejoice nor become sad if the money increases or decreases. This implies that we must neither become slaves to money nor our worldly possessions. Thus, we can be wealthy and still be *Zāhid* if we are thankful to Allah (SWT) and use our wealth in the right way.[13] This meaning has been emphasized by Sufyan bn Uyaynah when asked who is to be considered a *Zāhid*. He said a *Zāhid* is a person who is thankful to Allah (SWT)[14] for the bounty bestowed and patient when afflicted with trial.[15]

Sufyan al-Thawri opined that *al-Zuhd* in this world is when deep in your heart; you are ready for hereafter i.e. you think of death and whether you are ready to face it.[16] *Zuhd* therefore is a status of the heart where a person fears he will not live a long life. This will motivate him to become a good Muslim. The realization that we are going to leave this world at any movement shall lead us closer to Allah (SWT), to fulfill obligations and avoid any form of disobedience.

Scholars have discerned different forms of *Zuhd*:

    i.   Avoidance of sin and disobedience
    ii.   Avoidance of being misled by human desires.
    iii.   Avoidance of exceeding the limits of the permissible acts (*Mubah*). e.g. unnecessary sleeping for long hours or eating too much.[17]

Ibn Rajah insisted that, an individual has attained the highest level of *zuhd* when he does not hope for a long life, eager for the hereafter and looks forward to meeting Allah (SWT).[18] Our lives should serve as a peaceful means to the hereafter. We should be contented with all that was bestowed upon us, never to succumb to desires and only to be fulfilled in a lawful manner without being excessive.

The opposite of asceticism is "love of this material world" which the Prophet (SAW) said:

---

[12] H. Siddiqi, (1971). *Sahih Muslim*, *Op cit.*

[13] J. A. Badi, *Commentary on the forty Hadith of Al-Nawawi*, conveying Islamic message Society, Egypt, (n.d) p.161.

[14] SWT is an Arabic abbreviation of 'Glorified is His Majesty'. It is an expression of reverence to God the Creator.

[15] *Ibid,* p. 161

[16] *Ibid,* p. 161

[17] *Ibid,* p. 161

[18] *Ibid,* p. 161

> Whosoever loves this world causes harm to his hereafter and whosoever loves hereafter causes harm to his world. Therefore, give preference to that which is eternal over that which will perish (Ahmad, Baihaqi).

The Prophet (SAW) equally said that:

> The love of this world is the root of every evil (Baihaqi).

But doing what is beneficial is not regarded as the love of this world because it will facilitate achievement of obligations spelt by Allah (SWT). Therefore, *Zuhd* is not restricted to merely isolation from the rest of community or by living in a single place for the purpose of worshiping Allah and disregarding all that is related to this world as understood by some Muslims.

Worship is a broad concept and it covers acts which are carried out to benefit and improve the community, if such actions are done with good intention totally for the sake of Allah. It could also be regarded as *Zuhd*. Hence, *Zuhd* also involves doing actions in the right way and with good intention for the sake of Allah (SWT).

2.2 De-radicalization

De-radicalization is anti-radicalization. It is after adequate grasp of radicalization, the process of de-radicalization can take effect. Radicalization is a product of straying away from moderation (center) and lack of insight into the true nature of Islam - its purpose, spirit and essence. Contrary to moderation, the acclaimed activist began to build up dissatisfaction about how others practice or accommodate the principles of Islam. He/ she get extreme, being situated at the furthest possible point from the center and remoteness in religion, thought and behaviour.[19]

De-radicalization is in other words the convenience of extremism leading to terrorism.[20] Therefore; de-radicalization is defined by the UN working group on de-radicalization and extremism leading to terrorism; as programmes that are generally directed against individuals, who have become radical with the aim of re-integrating them into society or dissuading them from violence.[21]

John Horgan conceived the term de-radicalization as "the social and psychological process whereby an individual's commitment to, and involvement in, violent radicalization is reduced to the extent that they are no longer at risk of involvement and engagement in violent activity. It may also refer to any initiative that tries to achieve a reduction of risk of re-offending through addressing the specific and relevant disengagement issues.[22] In contrast to Hogan; Omar Ashour sees the phenomenon of de-radicalization as:

---

[19] Al-Qaradawi, *Islamic Awakening Between Rejection and Extremism*, the International Institute of Islamic thought, 1991, p.8.

[20] M. S. Elshimi, 'The Concept and Practice of De-radicalisation in the PREVENT Strand of the UK Counter-terrorism Strategy: What is De-radicalisation?', Ph. D Thesis, University of Exeter, November, 2015, p. 76.

[21] UN Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force, 2008, 5.

[22] J. Hogan, 'Individual disengagement. A psychological analysis' in T. Bjorgo and J. Hogan Routlege (eds*.) Leaving Terrorism Behind Disengaging from Political Violence*, New York, 2009, p.15 3.

a process of relative change within Islamist Movements, one in which a radical group reverses its ideology and de-legitimizes the use of violence to achieve political goals.[23]

In their contribution, Demant *et al* defined de-radicalization as the opposite of radicalization and as the process of becoming less radical.[24] This definition locates de-radicalization within the particular context of Islamist movements with wider political and social environments which is a collective phenomenon and specifically involves ideological vision.

In contrast, Rabasa defines de-radicalization "as a process of abandoning an extremist worldviews and concluding that it is not acceptable to use violence to effect change."[25] In this process there is recognition that social, political and economic transformation will occur slowly.

From a different perspective, the Quilliam Foundation (QF) defines de-radicalization as a process through which the ideology behind extremism is questioned and refuted and replaced in favour of a more traditional, pluralistic understanding of Islam.[26]

From these definitions, it could be conceived that de-radicalization process is an essential part of fighting terrorism, embedded in a war of ideas. But a key question is whether the objective of counter radicalization programme should be disengagement (a change in behaviour) or de-radicalization (a change in beliefs) of militants. However, a unique challenge is posed by understanding of the west that the ideology of the militant Islamist groups is rooted in Islam. More importantly too is the fact that the requirement of the ideology are regarded as religious obligations.

There is no denying the fact that the requirements of an ideology rooted in a religion are regarded as religious obligation, but it is the point of departure between the true understanding of Islamic dictates and values, and radical extremist postulations. This is the central thrust of this paper which seeks to explore the role of Islamic asceticism in de-radicalization packages.

2.3 Islamic Asceticism and De-radicalization

The principles of asceticism from the Islamic stand point are means of moderation in all values that are germane to the general principles and practices of Islam. One fascinating idea about *Zuhd* (asceticism) from the earlier discussion is the centrality of the heart,

---

[23] O. Ashour, *The Deradicalisation of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movement.* Rotledge, New York and London, 2009.

[24] F. Demant, *et al*, "Decline and Disengagement: An Analysis of Processes of Deradicalization*", International Migration and Ethics Studies*, (2008), Amsterdam, http://dare.uva.nt/document/2/64714. Accessed on 07/09 2018.

[25] A. Rabasa, *et al. Deradicalising Islamist Extremists*, RAND Corporation, National Security Research Division, 2010 www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MGIO53.pdf. Accessed on 03/09/2018.

[26] S. Johnson, 'is the Deradicalisation of Islamist extremist possible in a secular society such as Britain?' PLOIS Journal 2, University of leads, 2009, www.polis.leed.ac.uk/assets/files/students/student-journal/ma-writer-09/sara-johnson-writer-09.pdf. Accessed on 07/09/2018.

which is the 'soul' that propels individuals to act in a certain way. Avoiding sins and disobedience to Allah and His Messenger (SAW) and avoiding being misled by desires are forms of self-discipline to attaining purity of mind and soul, redemption and higher spirituality. The concern here is a motivation towards becoming a good Muslim by constant remembrance that a simple life style is a cloak of the Prophet (SAW), a life style that constitutes a means of drawing closer to Allah. Very important also is the concern for the Hereafter, the realization that we will sooner or later exit; to meet Allah (SWT) not the opposite. The Glorious Qur'an confirms:

> And be afraid of the Day when you shall be brought back to Allāh. Then every person shall be paid what he earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly.[27]

The soul stood very indispensably in de-radicalization milieu. This brings to the case for conceptualizing de-radicalization as the technologies of the self. In Islam every believer must be able to perceive the human defects, flaws, weaknesses and nothingness in the face of Allah's greatness, power and perfection. The perception that other people are anti-Islamic and so leading to radicalization is a product of extremists' misrepresentation of Islam. One should consider the soul and its blameworthy traits referred to in the Glorious Qur'an,[28] that if not the grace of Allah no one will be free from exhibiting the characteristics of the appetitive soul of humans. To struggle to refine it with sincere effort is considered by the Prophet (SAW) as the 'greatest *jihad'* due to its importance and degree of difficulty.[29]

The concept of the technologies of the soul was formulated by Michael Foucault in 1992.[30] He defined it as that:

> …which permits individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their body and souls, thoughts, conduct and the way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality.[31]

This definition takes a look at the human inward perception, self examination in consideration of the life beyond this ephemeral entity and being conscious of Allah in all dealings. As an ascetic mechanism for de-radicalization therefore, the technologies of the soul comprised four critical dimensions namely; ontology, ascetics, deontology and teleology.[32]

(i)   Ontology is concerned with the ethical substance which directly affects the thoughts, body desire or identity of individuals.

(ii)   Ascetics primarily denote how the one achieves the ethical goals through what activities and techniques.

(iii)   Deontology relates to the question of who we are when we are governed. In other words, what was the frame of our mind when we are conscious of a watch-over us?

---

[27] Qur'an 2:281

[28] Qur'an 12:53

[29] See Suyuti, *Jami'u Saghir*, Vol. 2, 73.

[30] M.S. Elshimi, *Op Cit*, p.76

[31] Foucault, 1988a, 18.

[32] *Ibid*, quoted in Elshimi, *Op Cit*, p. 77.

(iv)   Teleology is concerned with "why" we are governed, the target of achievement and the spirit behind our ideals e.g. money, salvation etc.

The above four-fold dimension is deployed to interpret de-radicalization. For example, the conventional view of de-radicalization is that it is an attempt to tackle ideology (which more often triggered radicalization) and cognitive dimension of 'radicals' (ontology), through the practice of interventions, programmes and *Da'wah* techniques (ascetics), targeting general Muslim citizens and radicalize Muslim subjects in particular (de-ontology), for the purpose of behavior change, which means the abandonment of violence (teleology).

Asceticism contains important restraining forces which may set limits to violence. Its principles placed retributions on desire for all worldly and physical pleasures. To be Steadfast with commands of Allah instills the quest to live by His will. This is like a shield against excessive quest for worldly pleasures and softens the hearts against radical tendencies. Initially, and as it ought to be, extremism and violence as products of radicalization can never compete with the rich emotions evoked by asceticism. The rich tradition of Islamic eschatology is preached by asceticism and this motivates believers to come closer to Allah (SWT).[33]

The notion of *Jihad* had often been seen as a catapulting spirit behind radicalization for truly just Islamic state. However, such a sophisticated understanding of *Jihad* by Islamists has undergone considerable changes because the idea becomes confined to military approach which is contrary to the interpretation of Muslim scholars and thinkers. Qutb's stance for instance was interpreted as a call for extremism and terrorism. However, his works were about reform of humanity and care, communal obligation, the need to sustain a good community, and to exercise compassion.[34] Very instructively, *Jihad* generally emphasized the exercise of peaceful means, or the effort and exertion involved in any form of worship that aims to get closer to Allah, foster the pursuit of knowledge and livelihood, the caring for others, or to boost the cause of Islam.[35] Effort to get closer to Allah is one of the foundational pillars of asceticism. But this cannot be achieved without exerting effort to first wage *Jihad* against desires – to purify the soul against frivolous desires referred to by Prophet Muhammad (SAW).[36]

To de-radicalize completely is quit a difficult task but the process of disengagement from terrorism forms part of a long-term response to de-radicalization.[37] In other words, disengagement in part leads to de-radicalization because many more people hold radical views than actually engage in violence, and some of those involved in violence don't hold strong ideological beliefs. So, the link between attitude and behavior is not always

---

[33] Qur'an 57:20

[34] M. Abdalla (ed.). *Interregional Challenges of Extremist Movement in North Africa*, Institute for Security Studies, p. 223, 2011, Pretorial, South Africa. Also, See S. Qutb, *Milestones*, America Transl. Publications, Indiana, 1991.

[35] M. Abdullah, *Ibid*.

[36] See Suyuti, *Jamiu Saghir*, vol. 2, 73.

[37] S. Marsden, *How to Deradicalize someone*, The conversation Foundation, U.K. June, 2017, available at http://theconversation.com.how-to-deradicalizesomeone-78969.

straight forward. This is where Islamic asceticism asserts its influence in de-radicalization milieu.

Zuhd (asceticism) emphasizes purification of the heart and soul and moving away from sin and general disobedience to Allah (SWT). This involves the process of disengaging the heart from clinging on to attitudes or ideas that support extremism, towards behavioral change for becoming a better Muslim. Attitudinal and behavioral changes are so germane to asceticism that the Prophet (SAW) considers the heart as the central tendency to doing either good or bad. He said:

> …Their lies within the body a piece of flesh. If it is sound, the whole body is sound; and if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted. Verily, it (this flesh) is the heart.[38]

So, one of the ways in attaining good character is to refine and purify the heart. Extreme or radical ideologies are concentrated in the heart before actions of violence are exhibited. Whatever reasons that had been adduced for extremism leading to terrorism, the true *Mujahid* (struggler in the way of Allah), according to the Prophet (SAW) is the one who struggles against his soul.[39] The Prophet (SAW) equally expressed a warning that:

> The thing I fear most for my community is that they will follow the desires of their soul.[40]

It is on this basis that scholars and ascetics first prepare the hearts of their followers by softening it and making it ready for reform. They then, attempt to mend their negative traits. Therefore, the background needs to be prepared for the radical extremists to regret their attitude and behavior before any process could commence towards disengagement and de-radicalization.

One of the factors advanced for radical extremism by violent Islamists is allergy to certain western values which are directly or indirectly antithetical to Islamic values and principles of human rights.[41] The attempt by the West to police the world and Islamists' ideology inference from West's policies to undermine the veracity and growth of Islam are some of the fundamental elements for uprising in radical thoughts and violence against the West. Meanwhile, as true as it is that certain western foreign policies, especially against predominant Muslim nations and Islam are draconic, the Islamists have lost sight of Allah's promise to protect and guard His religion-Islam. Allah mentions:

> They intend to put out the light of Allah (i.e. the religion of Islam, this Qur'an, and Prophet Muhammad [SAW]) with their months. But Allah will bring His light to perfection even thought the disbelievers hate (it) (Q 61:8).

Not only guarding Islam against any external aggression, Allah promises to also make Islam triumphant over any other religion. He still says:

> He it is who sent His Messenger (Muhammad [SAW]) with guidance and the religion of the truth (Islamic Monotheism) to make it victorious over all (other) religions even though the *Mushrikun* (Polytheists, pagans & idolaters, and

---

[38] Bukhari and Muslim related it.

[39] Tirmidhi, *Fada'ilal-Jihad* 2/162; Ahmad, Vol. 20

[40] Suyuti, 1. 12.

[41] Elshimi, *Op cit* p. 176.

disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah and in His Messenger Muhammad [SAW])
hate (it). (Q61:9).

From ascetic principles, Muslims need not to go violent with any Potential or assumed enemy. The unflinching submission to the Will of Allah and sincere trust in Him would leave no forum for the West to destroy Islam as easy as they might think. Hence, the violent Islamist are expected to thread the path of salvation here and in the Hereafter by sheathing their sword and embracing lawful means of achieving Allah's desire for Muslims and Islam on earth without any rancor.

Extremism is condemned in all its forms. Contrary to the claims of violent Muslim extremists, Islam encouraged moderation. To de-radicalize, a proper understanding of Islamic principles of moderation in all acts of worship is required. On the authority of Abu Hurayrah (R.A) who said: "The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W) said:

> Truly, the religion is ease. Anyone who tries to outdo the religion in strictness, it will overcome him. So remain steadfast and be moderate…[42]

To inflict burden greater than what is bearable in the name of Islam, is against the will of Allah[43] and *Sunnah* of the Prophet (SAW). This is because Allah burdens not a person beyond his scope. Asceticism emphasized that it is the prerogative of Allah (SWT) to protect His religion. Insistence on forcing the enemy to abandon their course by all means, are deeds that open the door to extremism in the religion of Islam. Extremism and excessiveness to cause harm to others in terms of violent acts (terrorism) are regrettable to perpetrators.

The extremists, radical Islamists considered their acclaimed "struggle" (*Jihad*) as a form of worship. By *Sufi* standard as well as ascetic life, there will never be a justification for terrorism due to extremis. But moderation in all facets of life has been commended by the Prophet (SAW). On the authority of Hudhaifah (R.A), the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W) said:

> How excellent is moderation in prosperity! How excellent is moderation in poverty! How excellent is moderation in worship![44]

2.4 Conclusion

Islam is a religion of moderation embedded in moderate *Tasawwuf* (Sufism) as well as *Zuhd* (practical ascetic life). Its foundation is peace and security among its adherents and with people of other faith. It abhors extreme tendencies that finally translate to radicalization and extremism. The paper therefore draws inspiration from the principles of asceticism as it is characterized by the simple lifestyle of the Prophet (SAW) as a role model to the believers. Indifference to the world that attracts the love of Allah and indifference to what people possess to draw love of people were both taught by the Prophet (SAW). He institutionalized avoidance of sins and moving away from acts that could mislead us by our desires. He pushed Muslims towards becoming better adherents. To de-radicalize therefore the efficacy of an ascetic life was showered appropriate light in the form of purification of the heart and soul, living a simple and moderate life, being

---

[42] Bukhari, (*Mishkat*, Book of prayer, *Hadith* No. 1246).

[43] Qur'an 2:286

[44] *Musnad al-Bazzar* (*Kanz al-'Ummah*).

concerned about the heart thorough understanding of the technologies of the self and general restraining forces of asceticism against violence.

2.5 Recommendations

When a challenge is plugged in a proper perspective, its understanding and remedies will not be far-fetched. This paper therefore recommends thus:

i.   Muslims and non-Muslims alike should try to understand Islam as adequate enough as revealed in the Glorious Qur'an and as exhibited by the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W).

ii.   As part of the principles of asceticism, believers should direct their trust and complete submission to Allah and expect His full support and protection in all facets of life.

iii.   The soul should always be our focus and to struggle against being misled by human desires.

iv.   Moderate positions in terms of religious practices should be maintained so as to avoid extreme radical views that at the long run, culminates into violence and terrorism.

v.   Government at all levels as well as non-governmental Muslim Organizations should emphasize ascetic life and design programs meant to disengage Muslim youths from radical positions.

vi.   Islamic spirituality which is the environment of an ascetic life should always be the target of Muslim activists not violent extremism.

References

Al-Qardawi, Y. (1991). *Islamic Awakening Between Rejection and Extremism*, UK: the International Institute of Islamic Thought.

Abdalla, M. (ed.).(2011). *Interregional Challenges of Extremist Movement in North Africa*, Pretorial - South Africa: Institute for Security Studies.

Ali, A. Y., (1973). *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary*, London: the Islamic Foundation.

Ashour, O. (2009) *The Deradicalisation of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movement.* New York and London", Routlege.

[1]Athar Hussain, *The Message of Muhammad (SAW)*.

Badi, J. A. (n.d). *Commentary on the Forty Hadith of Al-Nawawi*, Egypt: Conveying Islamic Message Society.

Bukhari, M., (nd). *Sahih al-Bukhari*, transl. by Muhammad, M. K. Lebanon: Dar al-Arab Publishers.

Demant, F. *et al*, (2008). "Decline and Disengagement: An Analysis of Processes of Deradicalization*",* in *International Migration and Ethics Studies*, (2008), Amsterdam, http://dare.uva.nt/document/2/64714. Accessed on 07/09 2018.

Elshimi, M. S. 'The Concept and Practice of De-radicalisation in the PREVENT Strand of the UK Counter-terrorism Strategy: What is De-radicalisation?' Ph.D Thesis, University of Exeter, November, 2015.

Foucault, 1988a, 18.

Hogan, J. 'Individual disengagement: A psychological analysis' in Bjorgo T. and Hogan J. (eds.) (2009). *Leaving Terrorism Behind Disengaging from Political Violence*, New York: Routlege.

Johnson, S. 'is the Deradicalisation of Islamist extremist possible in a secular society such as Britain?' PLOIS Journal 2, University of leads, 2009, www.polis.leed.ac.uk/assets/files/students/student-journal/ma-writer-09/sara-johnson-writer-09.pdf. Accessed on 07/09/2018.

Mariam Dictionary.com

Marsden, S. (2017). *How to Deradicalize someone*. UK: The conversation Foundation, U.K. available at http://theconversation.com.how-to-deradicalizesomeone-78969.

Musnad al-Bazzar (*Kanz al-'Ummah*).

Qutb, S. (1991). *Milestones* Indiana: America Transl. Publications.

Rabasa, A. *et al.* (2010). *Deradicalising Islamist Extremists*, RAND Corporation, National Security Research Division, www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MGIO53.pdf. Accessed on 03/09/2018.

Schmid, A. P. (2013). *Radicalisation, De-Radicalization, Counter Radicalization: A Conceptual Discussion and literature review*, The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, (ICCT).

Siddiqi, H. (1971). *Sahih Muslim*, (Engl. Transl.), Riyadh: 1.1.P.H.

Suyuti, *Jami'u Saghir*, Vol. 2,

Tirmidhi, *Fada'ilal-Jihad* 2/162; Ahmad, Vol. 20

UN Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force, 2008, 5.