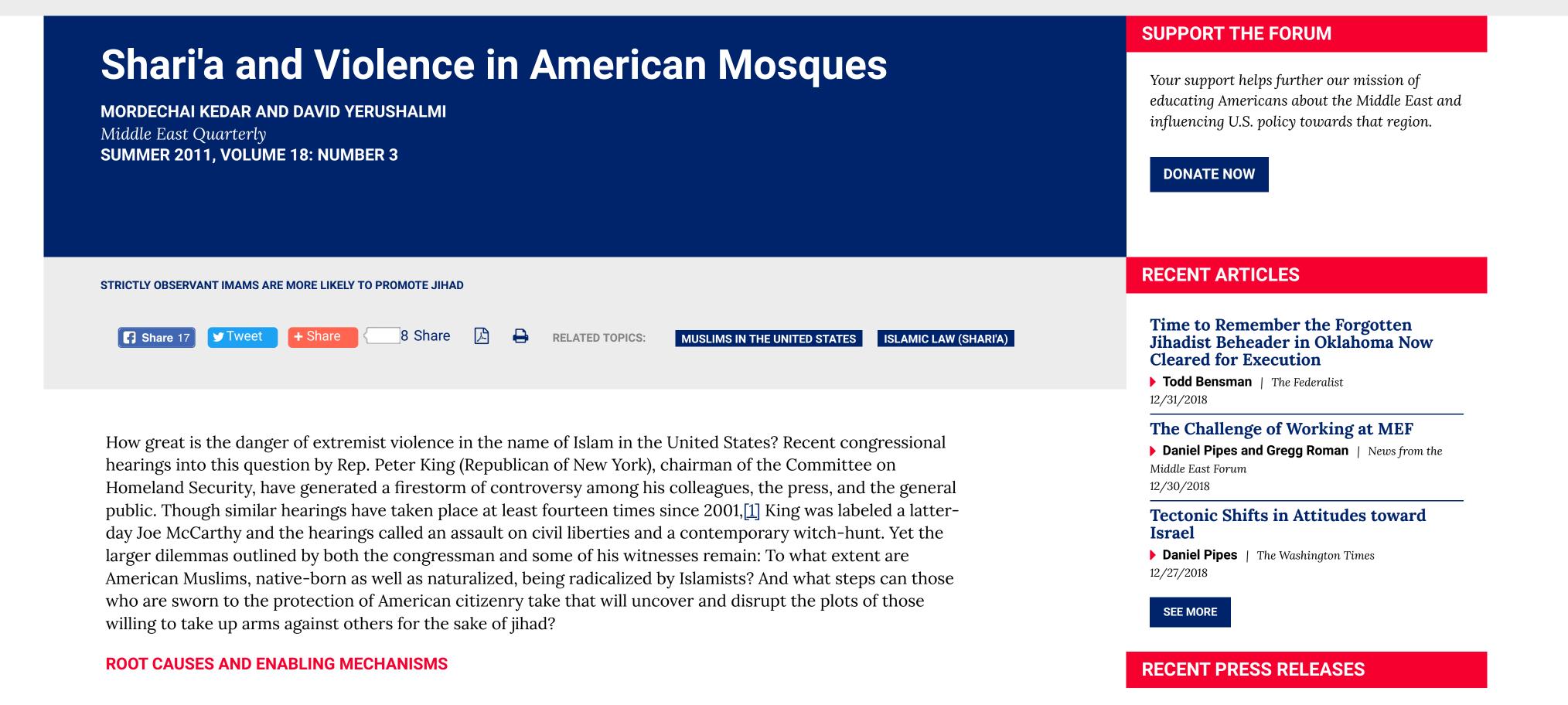You're invited: Join Daniel Pipes & MEF on a fact-finding mission to Poland, Hungary & Austria. For more information, click here.

# Shari'a and Violence in American Mosques

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**STRICTLY OBSERVANT IMAMS ARE MORE LIKELY TO PROMOTE JIHAD**

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How great is the danger of extremist violence in the name of Islam in the United States? Recent congressional hearings into this question by Rep. Peter King (Republican of New York), chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, have generated a firestorm of controversy among his colleagues, the press, and the general public. Though similar hearings have taken place at least fourteen times since 2001,[1] King was labeled a latter-day Joe McCarthy and the hearings called an assault on civil liberties and a contemporary witch-hunt. Yet the larger dilemmas outlined by both the congressman and some of his witnesses remain: To what extent are American Muslims, native-born as well as naturalized, being radicalized by Islamists? And what steps can those who are sworn to the protection of American citizenry take that will uncover and disrupt the plots of those willing to take up arms against others for the sake of jihad?

## ROOT CAUSES AND ENABLING MECHANISMS

While scholarly inquiry into the root causes and factors supportive of terrorism has accelerated since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, there are few empirical studies that attempt to measure the relationship between specific variables and support for terrorism. To date, almost all of the professional and academic work in this field has been anecdotal surveys or case studies tracing backward through the personal profiles of terrorists and the socioeconomic and political environments from which they came.[2]



A comprehensive study of the relationship between Shari'a adherence and incitement to violence in American mosques found that mosques that segregated men from women during prayer service were more likely to contain violence-positive materials than those where men and women were not segregated.

One study by Quintan Wiktorowicz, assistant professor of international studies at Rhodes College and now on the staff of the National Security Council,[3] noted that modern jihadists legitimize their violent activities by relying on the same textual works as their nonviolent Salafist counterparts. However, the approach taken to these texts by the violent jihadist may be distinguished from that of the nonviolent Salafist insofar as the jihadist uses the principles advanced by both classical and modern Islamic scholars and ideologues and adapts them to modern situations in a way that provides a broader sanction for the permissible use of violence.[4]

Further, in 2007, Paul Gill concluded that terrorist organizations seek societal support by creating a "culture of martyrdom" and that one theme common to suicide bombers was the support they received from a community that esteemed the concept of martyrdom. Thus, a complex dynamic is at work between a terrorist organization, society, and individuals with the interplay between these three dimensions enabling radicalization and terrorist attacks.[5]

Another item that may help to understand the growth of modern jihadism appears in Marc Sageman's 2004 study, which found that 97 percent of jihadists studied had become increasingly devoted to forms of Salafist Islam highly adherent to Shari'a (Islamic law) while on their path to radicalization, despite many coming from less rigorous devotional levels during their youths. This increase in devotion to Salafist Islam was measured by outwardly observable behaviors such as wearing traditional Arabic, Pakistani, or Afghan clothing or growing a beard.[6]

When viewed together, a picture emerges that may give researchers, as well as law enforcement officials, a way to monitor or potentially to predict where violent jihad may take root. Potential recruits who are swept up in this movement may find their inspiration and encouragement in a place with ready access to classic and modern literature that is positive toward jihad and violence, where highly Shari'a-adherent behavior is practiced, and where a society exists that in some form promotes a culture of martyrdom or at least engages in activities that are supportive of violent jihad. The mosque can be such a place.

That the mosque is a societal apparatus that might serve as a support mechanism for violent jihad may seem self-evident, but for it to be a useful means for measuring radicalization requires empirical evidence. A 2007 study by the New York city police department noted that, in the context of the mosque, high levels of Shari'a adherence, termed "Salafi ideology" by the authors of the report, may relate to support for violent jihad. Specifically, it found that highly Shari'a-adherent mosques have played a prominent role in radicalization.[7] Another study found a relationship between frequency of mosque attendance and a predilection for supporting suicide attacks but discovered no empirical evidence linking support for suicide bombings to some measure of religious devotion (defined and measured by frequency of prayer).[8]

However, the study suffers from a major methodological flaw, namely, reliance on self- reporting of prayer frequency. Muslims would be under social and psychological pressure to report greater prayer frequency because their status as good or pious believers is linked to whether they fulfill the religious obligation to pray five times a day.[9] This piety is not dependent on regular mosque attendance as Muslims are permitted to pray outside of a mosque environment whenever necessary.[10] Hence, the pressure to over-report exists for self-reporting of prayer frequency but is not present in self-reporting of frequency of mosque attendance, which is a measure of both coalitional or group commitment and religious devotion.

Thus, there is a need for the study and corroboration of a relationship between high levels of Shari'a adherence as a form of religious devotion and coalitional commitment, Islamic literature that shows violence in a positive light, and institutional support for violent jihad. By way of filling this lacuna, the authors of this article undertook a survey specifically designed to determine empirically whether a correlation exists between observable measures of religious devotion linked to Shari'a adherence in American mosques and the presence of violence-

positive materials at those mosques. The survey also sought to ascertain whether a correlation exists between the presence of violence-positive materials at a mosque and the promotion of jihadism by the mosque's leadership through recommending the study of these materials or other manifest behaviors.

### IDENTIFYING SHARI'A-ADHERENT BEHAVIORS

Shari'a is the Islamic system of law based primarily on two sources held by Muslims to be respectively direct revelation from God and divinely inspired: the Qur'an and the Sunna (sayings, actions, and traditions of Muhammad). There are other jurisprudential sources for Shari'a derived from the legal rulings of Islamic scholars. These scholars, in turn, may be adherents of differing schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Notwithstanding those differences, the divergence at the level of actual law is, given the fullness of the *corpus juris*, confined to relatively few marginal issues. Thus, there is general unity and agreement across the Sunni-Shiite divide and across the various Sunni *madh'habs* (jurisprudential schools) on core normative behaviors.[11]

Surveyors were asked to observe and record selected behaviors deemed to be Shari'a-adherent. These behaviors were selected precisely because they constitute observable and measurable practices of an orthodox form of Islam as opposed to internalized, non-observable articles of faith. Such visible modes of conduct are considered by traditionalists to have been either exhibited or commanded by Muhammad as recorded in the Sunna and later discussed and preserved in canonical Shari'a literature. The selected behaviors are among the most broadly accepted by legal practitioners of Islam and are not those practiced only by a rigid subgroup within Islam—Salafists, for example.

Among the behaviors observed at the mosques and scored as Shari'a-adherent were: (a) women wearing the *hijab* (head covering) or *niqab* (full-length shift covering the entire female form except for the eyes); (b) gender segregation during mosque prayers; and (c) enforcement of straight prayer lines. Behaviors that were not scored as Shari'a-adherent included: (a) women wearing just a modern *hijab*, a scarf-like covering that does not cover all of the hair, or no covering; (b) men and women praying together in the same room; and (c) no enforcement by the imam, lay leader, or worshipers of straight prayer lines.

The normative importance of a woman's hair covering is evidenced by two central texts, discussed at length below, *Reliance of the Traveller* and *Fiqh as-Sunna* (Law of the Sunna), both of which express agreement on the obligation of a woman to wear the *hijab*:

> ***There is no such dispute over what constitutes a woman's aurah [private parts/nakedness]. It is stated that her entire body is aurah and must be covered, except her hands and face … God does not accept the prayer of an adult woman unless she is wearing a head covering (khimar, hijab).[12]***

> ***The nakedness of a woman (even if a young girl) consists of the whole body except the face and hands. The nakedness of a woman is that which invalidates the prayer if exposed. … It is recommended for a woman to wear a covering over her head (khimar), a full length shift, and a heavy slip under it that does not cling to the body.[13]***

In a similar fashion, Shari'a requires that the genders be separated during prayers. While both *Reliance of the Traveller* and *Fiqh as-Sunna* express a preference that women should pray at home rather than the mosque,[14] they agree that if women do pray in the mosque, they should pray in lines separate from the men.[15] Additionally, authoritative Shari'a literature agrees that the men's prayer lines should be straight, that men should be close together within those lines, and that the imam should enforce prayer line alignment.[16]

### SANCTIONED VIOLENCE

The mosques surveyed contained a variety of texts, ranging from contemporary printed pamphlets and handouts to classic texts of the Islamic canon. From the perspective of promoting violent jihad, the literature types were ranked in the survey from severe to moderate to nonexistent. The texts selected were all written to serve as normative and instructive tracts and are not scriptural. This is important because a believer is free to understand scripture literally, figuratively, or merely poetically when it does not have a normative or legal gloss provided by Islamic jurisprudence.

The moderate-rated literature was authored by respected Shari'a religious and/or legal authorities; while expressing positive attitudes toward violence, it was predominantly concerned with the more mundane aspects of religious worship and ritual. The severe material, by contrast, largely consists of relatively recent texts written by ideologues, rather than Shari'a scholars, such as Abul Ala Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb. These, as well as materials published and disseminated by the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, are primarily, if not exclusively, aimed at using Islam to advance a violent political agenda.

Mawdudi (1903-79), for one, believed that it was legitimate to wage violent jihad against "infidel colonizers" in order to gain independence and spread Islam. His *Jihad in Islam*, found in many of the mosques surveyed, instructed followers to employ force in pursuit of a Shari'a-based order:

> ***These [Muslim] men who propagate religion are not mere preachers or missionaries, but the functionaries of God [so that they may be witnesses for the people], and it is their duty to wipe out oppression, mischief, strife, immorality, high handedness, and unlawful exploitation from the world by force of arms.[17]***

Similarly, Qutb's *Milestones* serves as the political and ideological backbone of the current global jihad movement. Qutb, for example, sanctions violence against those who stand in the way of Islam's expansion:

> ***If someone does this [prevents others from accepting Islam], then it is the duty of Islam to fight him until either he is killed or until he declares his submission.[18]***

These materials differ from other severe- and moderate-rated materials because they are not Islamic legal texts per se but rather are polemical works seeking to advance a politicized Islam through violence, if necessary. Nor are these authors recognized Shari'a scholars.

The same cannot be said for some classical works that are also supportive of violence in the name of Islam. Works by several respected jurists and scholars from the four major Sunni schools of jurisprudence, dating from the eighth to fourteenth centuries, are all in agreement that violent jihad against non-Muslims is a religious obligation.[19] Such behavior is normative, legally-sanctioned violence not confined to modern writers with a political axe to grind. Nor does its presence in classical Muslim works make it a relic of some medieval past. While *Umdat as-Salik* (Reliance of the Traveler) may have been compiled in the fourteenth century, al-Azhar University, perhaps the preeminent center of Sunni learning in the world, stated in its 1991 certification of the English translation that the book "conforms to the practice and faith of the orthodox Sunni community."[20] While addressing a host of theological matters and detailed instructions as to how Muslims should order their daily routine to demonstrate piety and commitment to Islam, this certified, authoritative text spends eleven pages expounding on the applicability of jihad as violence directed against non-Muslims, stating for example:

> ***The caliph … makes war upon Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians … provided he has first invited them to enter Islam in faith and practice, and if they will not, then invited them to enter the social order of Islam by paying the non-Muslim poll tax.[21]***

> ***The caliph fights all other peoples until they become Muslim … because they are not a people with a book, nor honored as such, and are not permitted to settle with paying the poll tax. [22]***

The *Fiqh as-Sunna* and *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* are examples of works that were rated "moderate" for purposes of this survey. The former, which focuses primarily on the internal Muslim community, the family, and the individual believer and not on violent jihad, was especially moderate in its endorsement of violence. Relatively speaking, the *Fiqh as-Sunna* expresses a more restrained view of violent jihad, in that it does not explicitly call for a holy war

against the West even though it understands the Western influence on Islamic governments as a force that is destructive to Islam itself.[23]

Nonetheless, such texts do express positive views toward the use of violence against "the other," as expressed in the following:

> ***Ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, said, "The ties of Islam and the principles of the religion are three, and whoever leaves one of them becomes an unbeliever, and his blood becomes lawful: testifying that there is no god except God, the obligatory prayers, and the fast of Ramadan." ... Another narration states, "If anyone leaves one of [the three principles], by God he becomes an unbeliever, and no voluntary deeds or recompense will be accepted from him, and his blood and wealth become lawful." This is a clear indication that such a person is to be killed.[24]***

Similarly in *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*:

> ***Perform jihad against the disbelievers with the sword, and be harsh with the hypocrites with words, and this is the jihad performed against them.[25]***

The survey's findings, explored in depth below, were that 51 percent of mosques had texts that either advocated the use of violence in the pursuit of a Shari'a-based political order or advocated violent jihad as a duty that should be of paramount importance to a Muslim; 30 percent had only texts that were moderately supportive of violence like the *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* and *Fiqh as-Sunna*; 19 percent had no violent texts at all.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

A representative sample of one hundred mosques throughout the United States was surveyed. Table 1 presents the distribution of mosques by state. One quarter of the mosques had 10 or fewer worshipers; 50 percent had up to 28 worshipers; 75 percent had up to 70; the largest mosque had an estimated 1,700 worshipers.

**Table 1: Number of Mosques Surveyed by State**

|  | n= | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Arizona | 2 | 2 |
| California | 26 | 26 |
| District of Columbia | 1 | 1 |
| Florida | 12 | 12 |
| Georgia | 1 | 1 |
| Michigan | 8 | 8 |
| New Jersey | 5 | 5 |
| New York | 3 | 3 |
| North Carolina | 12 | 12 |
| Pennsylvania | 1 | 1 |
| South Carolina | 2 | 2 |
| Tennessee | 2 | 2 |
| Texas | 9 | 9 |
| Utah | 3 | 3 |
| Virginia | 13 | 13 |
| **Total** | **100** | **100** |

The study found a statistically significant association between the severity of violence-positive texts on mosque premises and Shari'a-adherent behaviors. As indicated in Table 2, mosques that segregated men from women during prayer service were more likely to contain violence-positive materials than those mosques where men and women were not segregated. Mosques that did not segregate genders were also less likely to possess violence-positive materials (26 percent) but nonetheless did carry both moderate (27 percent) and severe materials (47 percent).

**Table 2: Shari'a-adherent Mosques and Violence-positive Materials**

|  | No material (n=19) | Moderate [i] (n=30) | Severe (n=51) [ii] | Total | Chi-square (all df=2) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Prayer service*** [iii] Segregation in prayer |  |  |  |  | 6.48, p=.04 |
| No | 16 (26%) | 17 (27%) | 29 (47%) | 62 |  |
| Yes | 2 (5%) | 13 (35%) | 22 (60%) | 37 |  |
| Alignment of prayer lines |  |  |  |  | 16.86, p<.001 |
| No | 16 (36%) | 10 (22%) | 19 (42%) | 45 |  |
| Yes | 2 (4%) | 20 (37%) | 32 (59%) | 54 |  |
| ***Description of imam or lay leader*** [iv] Imam or lay leader has Sunna beard |  |  |  |  |  |
| No [v] | 13 (26%) | 14 (28%) | 23 (46%) | 50 | 6.62, p=.04 |
| Yes [vi] | 3 (7%) | 15 (33%) | 28 (61%) | 46 |  |
| Imam wore head covering |  |  |  |  |  |
| No | 9 (20%) | 16 (35%) | 21 (46%) | 46 | 1.98, p=.37 |
| Yes | 7 (14%) | 13 (26%) | 30 (60%) | 50 |  |
| Imam wore traditional (non-Western garb) |  |  |  |  | 4.97, p=.08 |
| No | 11 (25%) | 14 (32%) | 19 (43%) | 44 |  |
| Yes | 5 (10%) | 15 (29%) | 32 (62%) | 52 |  |
| Imam wore watch on right wrist [vii] |  |  |  |  | 2.61, p=.27 |
| No | 15 (18%) | 23 (28%) | 45 (54%) | 83 |  |
| Yes | 1 (8%) | 6 (50%) | 5 (42%) | 12 |  |
| [i] Has only Tafsir Ibn Kathir commentary on the Qur'an and/or *Fiqh as-Sunna* (n=20). [ii] Has *Riyadh as-Salaheen* (n=7) or more extreme fiqh material. [iii] In 1 mosque there was no prayer and surveyor could not determine the usual practice. [iv] 4 mosques did not have a leader. [v] 3 with no beard included in this category. [vi] 3 had traditional beards with henna; and all were in the severe group. They were combined with this group for ease of reporting. [vii] In 1 case it was not determined. | | | | | |

As was the case with gender segregation, those mosques that displayed strict alignment of men's prayer lines were more likely than their less observant counterparts to contain materials from both the moderate and severe categories. Thus, 59 percent of such mosques contained severe texts as opposed to 42 percent of mosques that did not enforce strict prayer line alignment. Conversely, only 4 percent of mosques with strict prayer line alignment possessed no violence-positive texts while 36 percent of their less observant counterparts exhibited no such literature.

Whether the mosque's imam or lay leader wore a traditional beard was also predictive of whether the mosque would contain violence-positive materials on premises. Of the mosques led by traditionally bearded imams, 61 percent contained literature in the severe category, 33 percent contained only moderate-rated materials, and 7 percent did not contain any. Forty-six percent of the mosques in which the imam did not wear a traditional beard contained severe materials, 28 percent had moderate-rated texts, and 26 percent contained none on site. Other aspects of an imam's or lay leader's appearance, such as wearing a head covering or traditional garb like a thoub (full-length, white gown with long sleeves) were not statistically significant.

Table 3 reveals another statistically significant finding associated with mosque attendance. Mosques that contained written materials in the severe category were the best attended, followed by those with only moderate-rated materials, trailed in turn by those lacking such texts. Mosques with severe materials had a mean attendance of 118 worshipers while mosques containing only moderate materials had a mean attendance of 60 worshipers; mosques that contained no violence-positive literature had a mean attendance of 15 worshipers.

**Table 3: Violence-positive Materials, Mosque Attendance, and Shari'a-based Worshiper Characteristics**

| | No material (n=19) | Moderate [i] (n=30) | Severe [ii] (n=51) | Total | F test (unless otherwise noted) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of worshipers [iii] | Median 4 Mean 15 | Median 25 Mean 60 | Median 45 Mean 118 | Median 28 Mean 81 | Kruskal-Wallis, p<.002 |
| Percentage of men with beards (SD) [iv] | 14% (26.3) (n=17) | 36% (25.4) (n=30) | 48% (32.4) (n=51) | 39% (31.7) (n=98) | F=8.61, df=2, 95P<.001 |
| Percentage of men with hats | 16% (25.8) (n=17) | 34% (26.2) (n=29) | 47% (32.6) (n=51) | 38% (31.3) (n=97) | F=6.54, df=2, 94 p=.002 |
| Percentage of men with Western garb | 73% (39.9) (n=16) | 35% (30.7) (n=30) | 34% (33.1) (n=51) | 41% (36.2) (n=97) | F=8.79, df=2, 94 p<.001 |
| Percentage of women with modern hijab (vs. traditional hijab/niqab) [v] | 57% (45.0) (n=7) | 38% (37.5) (n=21) | 42% (27.3) (n=37) | 33% (32.9) (n=65) | F=0.92, df=2, 62, p=.40 |
| Percentage of girls with hijab | 29% (48.8) (n=7) | 14% (32.2) (n=21) | 36% (40.4) (n=37) | 28% (43.8) (n=65) | F=1.87, df=2,62 p=.16 |
| Percentage of boys with head covering [vi] | 14% (37.8) (n=7) | 24% (37.6) (n=20) | 32% (40) (n=36) | 27% (38.8) (n=63) | F=0.72, df=2, 60, p=.49 |

[i] Has only Tafsir Ibn Kathir commentary on the Qur'an and/or *Fiqh as-Sunna* (n=20).
[ii] Has *Riyadh as-Salaheen* (n=7) or more extreme fiqh material.
[iii] In 2 mosques only the imam was present.
[iv] Data in parentheses that follow percentage figures denote the standard deviation.
[v] Women were present in 65 mosques.
[vi] Boys were present in 63 mosques.

The adoption or rejection of Western dress by male worshipers was yet another telling indicator of the presence of violence-positive materials. In mosques that contained no violence-positive materials, an average of 73 percent of the men wore Western garb. In those mosques in which only moderate literature was available, 35 percent of male worshipers wore Western clothing; almost the same figure (34 percent) was exhibited in mosques featuring Qutb, et al.

The survey was unable to find a statistically significant indicator when it came to women wearing a modern *hijab* as opposed to the more conservative traditional *hijab*, which covers all of the hair, or the *niqab*, which covers the whole body other than the eyes. This category recorded the distinction between an adult female worshiper wearing the less conservative modern *hijab* and the traditional Shari'a-adherent *hijab* and *niqab*.

Perhaps more troubling than the correlation between jihadist literature and Shari'a-adherent behaviors within a mosque was the role played by imams in recommending that worshipers study material that promote violence. The more manifestly Shari'a-adherent a mosque, the more likely its imam was to recommend the study of violence-positive texts. Thus, as seen in Table 4, 96 percent of the imams in mosques that observed strict prayer line alignment recommended such reading material. Similarly, 93 percent of the imams who sported a traditional, full beard endorsed the study of such writings.

But while the presence of certain Shari'a-adherent behaviors correlated almost one-to-one with the promotion of the violence-positive texts, the absence of these attributes should not be construed as a sign of true moderation. In mosques that did not practice strict prayer line alignment, a striking 72 percent of imams nonetheless recommended violence-positive materials. Similarly, 78 percent of imams who did not wear a traditional beard were proponents of these texts.

**Table 4: Shari'a-based Mosque Prayer, Shari'a-based Imam Characteristics, and Imam Recommended Violence-positive Material**

| | Did not recommend [i] (n=15, 15%) | Recommended (n=82, 85%) | Total (n=97) [ii] | Chi-square (all df=1) p= |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Prayer service*** | | | | |
| Segregation in prayer | | | | |
| No | 12 (20%) | 48 (80%) | 60 | 3.77, p=.05 |
| Yes | 2 (6%) | 34 (94%) | 36 | |
| Alignment of prayer lines | | | | |
| No | 12 (28%) | 31 (72%) | 43 | 11.10, p=.001 |
| Yes | 2 (4%) | 51 (96%) | 53 | |
| ***Description of imam or lay leader*** | | | | |
| Beard of imam or lay leader | | | | |
| No | 11 (22%) | 39 (78%) | 50 | 4.61, p=.03 |
| Yes | 3 (7%) | 43 (93%) | 46 | |
| Imam wore head covering | | | | |
| No | 9 (20%) | 37 (80%) | 46 | 1.76, p=.18 |
| Yes | 5 (10%) | 45 (90%) | 50 | |
| Imam wore traditional garb | | | | |
| No | 10 (23%) | 34 (77%) | 44 | 4.32, p=.04 |
| Yes | 4 (8%) | 48 (92%) | 52 | |
| Imam wore watch on right wrist [iii] | | | | |
| No | 14 (17%) | 69 (83%) | 83 | 2.37, p=.12 |
| Yes | 0 (0%) | 12 (100%) | 12 | |

[i] Ten imams did not recommend that a worshiper study any violence-positive materials and 4 imams instructed against the study of violence-positive materials. All 14 observations were included in the "do not recommend" category.
[ii] In 4 mosques, neither an imam nor a lay leader was present. However, in 1 of these 4 cases the imam had made clear recommendations on the mosque's webpage.
[iii] In 1 case it was not determined.

Moreover, mosques where the imam recommended violence-positive materials for study were marked by a higher presence of worshipers—both men and women—who took on a Shari'a-adherent appearance and a lower percentage of worshipers of a more assimilative or Western appearance (see Table 5). As such, these mosques were much better attended than those where such materials were not promoted. Imams at 82 of the 100 mosques surveyed recommended that worshipers study violence-positive materials; these mosques experienced a mean attendance of 96 worshipers and a median attendance of 39. At the same time, at the 15 mosques surveyed where the imam did not recommend the study of such texts, the mean attendance was approximately 17 worshipers with a median attendance figure of 4.

**Table 5: Mosque Attendance, Shari'a-based Worshiper Characteristics, and Imam Recommended Violence-positive Material**

|  | **Did not recommend [i]** (n=15, 15%) | **Recommended** (n=82, 85%) | **F test for significance** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of worshipers | Median=4 Total=250 | Median=39 Total=7864 | Mann-Whitney U p<.001 |
| Percentage of men with beards (SD) [ii] | 13% (27.6) (n=13) | 44% (30.3) (n=82) | F=11.99, df=1, 93, p=.001 |
| Percentage of men with hats | 15% (27.2) (n=13) | 42% (30.4) (n=81) | F=9.07, df=1, 92, p=.003 |
| Percentage of men with Western garb | 87% (19.1) (n=12) | 34% (32.6) (n=82) | F=30.17, df=1, 91, p<.0001 |
| Percentage of women with modern hijab (vs.traditional hijab/niqab) [iii] | 70% (44.7) (n=5) | 41% (30.9) (n=59) | F=3.85, df=1, 62, p<.054 |
| Percentage of girls with hijab | 20% (44.7%) (n=5) | 29% (41.6) (n=60) | F=.21, df=1, 63, p=.65 |
| Percentage of boys with head coverings | 0% (n=5) | 30% (39.6) (n=58) | F=2.77, df=1, 91, p<.10 |

[i] Ten imams did not recommend the study of any materials and 4 imams instructed against the study of violence-positive materials. All 14 observations were included in the "do not recommend" category.
[ii] Data in parentheses that follow percentage figures denote the standard deviation.
[iii] Women were present in 65 mosques. Data collected on percent women with niqab (rare), hijab, and modern hijab.

The survey found a strong correlation between the presence of severe violence-promoting literature and mosques featuring written, audio, and video materials that actually promoted such acts. By promotion of jihad, the study included literature encouraging worshipers to engage in terrorist activity, to provide financial support to jihadists, and to promote the establishment of a caliphate in the United States. These materials also explicitly praised acts of terror against the West; praised symbols or role models of violent jihad; promoted the use of force, terror, war, and violence to implement the Shari'a; emphasized the inferiority of non-Muslim life; promoted hatred and intolerance toward non-Muslims or notional Muslims; and endorsed inflammatory materials with anti-U.S. views. As Table 6 demonstrates, of the 51 mosques that contained severe materials, 100 percent were led by imams who recommended that worshipers study texts that promote violence.

**Table 6: Violence-positive Materials and Promotion of Violent Jihad**

|  | **No material** (n=19) | **Moderate [i]** (n=30) | **Severe [ii]** (n=51) | **Total** (n=100) | **Chi-square** (all df=2) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Imam recommended studying texts promoting violence |  |  |  |  | 70.7, p<.001 |
| No | 14 (82%) | 1 (3%) | 0 (0%) | 15 |  |
| Yes | 3 (18%) [iii] | 28 (97%) | 51 (100%) | 82 |  |
| Promoted violent jihad |  |  |  |  | 87.6, p<.001 |
| No | 18 (95%) | 1 (3%) | 0 (0%) | 19 |  |
| Yes | 1 (5%) | 29 (97%) | 51 (100%) | 81 |  |
| Promoted joining terrorist organization |  |  |  |  | .49, p=.78 |
| No | 18 (95%) | 28 (93%) | 46 (90%) | 92 |  |
| Yes | 1 (5%) | 2 (7%) | 5 (10%) | 8 |  |
| Promoted financial support of terror |  |  |  |  | 81.9, p<.001 |
| No | 18 (95%) | 1 (3%) | 1 (2%) | 20 |  |
| Yes | 1 (5%) | 29 (97%) | 50 (98%) | 80 |  |
| Collected money openly at mosque for known terrorist organization |  |  |  |  | .70, p=.70 |
| No | 18 (95%) | 29 (97%) | 47 (92%) | 94 |  |
| Yes | 1 (5%) | 1 (3%) | 4 (8%) | 6 |  |
| Promotes caliphate in U.S. |  |  |  |  | 81.9, p<.001 |
| No | 18 (95%) | 1 (3%) | 1 (2%) | 20 |  |
| Yes | 1 (5%) | 29 (97%) | 50 (98%) | 80 |  |
| Praising terror against West |  |  |  |  | 87.6, p<.001 |
| No | 18 (95%) | 1 (3%) | 0 (0%) | 19 |  |
| Yes | 1 (5%) | 29 (97%) | 51 (100%) | 81 |  |
| Distributed memorabilia featuring jihadists or terrorist organizations |  |  |  |  | 0.99, p=.61 |
| No | 18 (95%) | 28 (93%) | 45 (88%) | 91 |  |
| Yes | 1 (5%) | 2 (7%) | 6 (12%) | 9 |  |
| Mosque invited imams or preachers who are known to have promoted violent jihad |  |  |  |  | 28.9, p<.001 |
| No | 18 (95%) | 12 (40%) | 12 (24%) | 42 |  |
| Yes | 1 (5%) | 18 (60%) | 39 (76%) | 58 |  |

[i] Has only Tafsir Ibn Kathir commentary on the Qur'an and/or *Fiqh as-Sunna* (n=20).
[ii] Has *Riyadh as-Salaheen* (n=7) or more extreme fiqh material.
[iii] Denominator is 17, 2 in this column had no imam or leader.

For example, mosques containing violence-positive materials were substantially more likely to include materials promoting financial support of terror than mosques that did not contain such texts. A disturbing 98 percent of mosques with severe texts included materials promoting financial support of terror. Those with only moderate-rated materials on site were not markedly different, with 97 percent providing such materials. These results stand in stark contrast to the mosques with no violence-positive materials on their premises where only 5 percent provided materials urging financial support of terror.

These results were comparable when using other indicators of jihad promotion. Thus, 98 percent of mosques that contained severe-rated literature included materials promoting establishing an Islamic caliphate in the United States as did 97 percent of mosques containing only moderate-rated materials. By contrast, only one out of the 19 mosques (5 percent) that had no violence-positive literature advocated this. Similarly, mosques with severe or moderate materials invited speakers known to have promoted violent jihad (76 percent and 60 percent respectively) versus one mosque out of 19 (5 percent) which did not contain violence-positive texts.

Finally, three patterns of behavior indicating promotion of violent jihad did not strongly correlate to the presence of violence-positive literature. Despite the presence of severe texts in such mosques, only a small number actually encouraged joining a terrorist organization, openly collected monies for such organizations, or distributed memorabilia featuring jihadists or terrorist organizations. Although very few mosques engaged openly in these activities, a correlation between these activities and the presence and severity of violence-positive literature was shown to exist.

### BROADER POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The conclusions to be drawn from this survey are dismal at best, offering empirical support for previous anecdotal studies on the connection between highly Shari'a-adherent mosques and political violence in the name of Islam. The mosques where there were greater indicators of Shari'a adherence were more likely to contain materials that conveyed a positive attitude toward employing violent jihad against the West and non-Muslims. The fact that spiritual sanctioners who help individuals become progressively more radicalized are connected to highly Shari'a-adherent mosques is another cause for deep concern.[26] In almost every instance, the imams at the mosques where violence-positive materials were available recommended that worshipers study texts that promoted violence.

The survey also demonstrates that there are mosques and mosque-going Muslims who are interested in a non-Shari'a-centric Islam where tolerance of the other, at least as evidenced by the absence of jihad-promoting literature, is the norm. Mosques where violence-positive literature was not present exhibited significantly fewer indicators of orthodox, Shari'a-adherent behaviors and were also significantly less likely to promote violent jihad or invite speakers supportive of violent jihad. These non-Shari'a-centric mosques may provide a foundation from which a reformed Islam and its followers can more completely integrate into liberal, Western citizenship.

The results of this survey do not indicate the percentage of American Muslims that actually attend mosques with any regularity, nor does it reveal what relative percentage of American Muslims demonstrate Shari'a-adherent or non-adherent behaviors. Moreover, although this study shows that imams at Shari'a-adherent mosques recommend studying violence-positive materials and utilize their mosques for support of violent jihad, it does not capture the individual attendees' attitudes toward religiously sanctioned violence. However, it is at least reasonable to conclude that worshipers at such mosques are more sympathetic to the message of the literature present at those mosques and to what is being preached there. A follow-up survey of individual mosque attendees would provide insight regarding the relationship, if any, between Shari'a-adherence on the individual level and the individual's attitude toward violent jihad.

A recent study by Andrew F. March examined whether Islamic doctrine would allow Muslims to cooperate socially with non-Muslims and sincerely affirm liberal citizenship as that term is understood in its Western, democratic sense. He argued that there were grounds for an overlapping consensus but also noted that present-day Salafists cite texts holding that Muslims are either at war with non-Muslims or, at best, are in a state devoid of any obligation to cooperate socially with them.[27] Additionally, March noted that the underpinnings of his theoretical consensus might be negated by empirical evidence showing that a large percentage of Muslims are unaware of [or reject] arguments that advocate for Western notions of liberal citizenship.[28]

Although released before March's study, an April 2007 survey conducted by WorldPublicOpinion.org presented such empirical evidence. The survey found that majorities in Morocco, Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia—ostensibly moderate Muslim countries—favored a strict application of Shari'a law in every Islamic country and keeping Western values out of Islamic counties.[29] However, that survey reports the attitudes of residents in non-Western countries that enforce Shari'a to varying degrees. It might be expected that Muslims in the West—who are immersed in Western culture, values, and democracy—would express different attitudes than their counterparts in the Middle East, Far East, and North Africa.

Unfortunately, the results of the current survey strongly suggest that Islam—as it is generally practiced in mosques across the United States—continues to manifest a resistance to the kind of tolerant religious and legal framework that would allow its followers to make a sincere affirmation of liberal citizenship. This survey provides empirical support for the view that mosques across America, as institutional and social settings for mosque-going Muslims, are at least resistant to social cooperation with non-Muslims. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of mosques surveyed promoted literature supportive of violent jihad and a significant number invited speakers known to have promoted violent jihad and other behaviors that are inconsistent with a reasonable construct of liberal citizenship.

This survey suggests that, first and foremost, Muslim community leaders must take a more active role in educating their own faith community about the dangers associated with providing a safe haven for violent literature and its promotion—whether that safe haven is the mosque or the social club. These results also suggest that researchers and counterterrorist specialists should pay closer attention to the use and exploitation of classic Islamic legal doctrine and jurisprudence for recruiting and generating a commitment to violence against the perceived enemies of Islam. Finally, these findings should engender at least an interest among researchers to begin to study carefully Muslim attitudes toward citizenship and violence but one that differentiates between those who are Shari'a-adherent and those who are not. And, among Shari'a adherents, this future survey data must be sensitive to the distinction between traditionalism, orthodoxy, and Salafism, along with the more obvious sect distinctions, such as between Sunnis and Shiites.

**Shari'a-Adherent Behaviors:[1]**

| List | Description | Observation:Yes/No; or Count | Subject to Secondary Review[2] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender segregation during prayer service | Shari'a-adherent communal prayer occurs when men and women are segregated during prayer service. The segregation could occur by virtue of men and women praying in different buildings or different rooms. The segregation could also occur when men and women were in the same room, but were separated either with or without the use of a physical divider. Non-Shari'a-adherent communal prayer occurs when men and women are not segregated during the prayer service and the genders mix. | Yes/No | No |
| Alignment of men's prayer lines | Shari'a-adherent alignment of men's prayer lines occurs when either the imam, lay leader, or the worshipers inspect and enforce the straightness of the men's prayer lines. Non-Shari'a-adherent alignment of men's prayer lines occurs when there is no observable attention paid to strict alignment of the men's prayer lines. | Yes/No | No |
| Imam's or lay leader's beard [3] | An imam's or lay leader's beard is a Sunna-style (i.e., full) beard, whether trimmed or not and either with or without henna dye coloring the beard. A non-Sunna style beard is either limited to a chin-beard or if the imam or lay leader wears no beard at all. | Yes/No | No |
| Imam or lay leader wore head covering | Shari'a-adherent behavior is that the imam or lay leader wore a religious head covering. Non-Shari'a adherent behavior is that the imam or lay leader did not wear a religious head covering | Yes/No | No |
| Imam's or lay leader's clothing | Shari'a-adherent garb is any of the following: (a) short thoub; (b) pants rolled up above the ankles; or (c) ankle-length thoub. Non-Shari'a-adherent garb is Western-style clothing such as modern-style dress or casual pants and shirt. | Yes/No | No |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Imam or lay leader wore watch on his right wrist[4] | Certain Salafists wear the watch on the right wrist. Wearing the watch on the left wrist or not wearing a watch at all. | Yes/No | No |
| Percentage of men with beards | Shari'a-adherent behavior is for an adult male worshiper to have a beard (full or not). Non-Shari'a-adherent behavior is for an adult male worshiper to have no beard. | Count | No |
| Percentage of men with hats | Shari'a-adherent behavior is for an adult male to wear a religious hat. Non-Shari'a-adherent behavior is for an adult male to not wear a religious hat. | Count | No |
| Adult male worshipers' clothing | Shari'a-adherent behavior is to wear either: (a) short thoub; (b) pants rolled up above the ankles; or (c) ankle-length thoub or similar Muslim attire. Non-Shari'a-adherent behavior is to wear Western-style clothing such as pants not rolled up above the ankles. | Count | No |
| Adult female worshipers' clothing | Shari'a-adherent behavior is to wear either the traditional hijab (covering the hair) or the niqab (covering the entire female body except the eyes). Non-Shari'a-adherent behavior is to wear the modern hijab (a scarf that does not completely cover the hair) or to not wear any hair covering. | Count | No |
| Girls (age 5-12) wear hijab | Shari'a-adherent behavior is to wear the traditional hijab. Non-Shari'a-adherent behavior is to not wear the hijab. | Count | No |
| Boys (age 5-12) wear head covering | Shari'a-adherent behavior is to wear a religious head covering. Non-Shari'a-adherent behavior is to not wear a religious head covering. | Count | No |
| Presence of violence-positive Shari'a legal and religious texts or presence of violence-positive Islamic political literature | If the surveyor found the *Fiqh as-Sunna* or *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, but not more extreme materials, then the mosque was categorized as containing moderate-rated material. If the surveyor found the *Riyadh as-Salaheen*, works by Qutb or Mawdudi, or similar materials, then the mosque was categorized as containing severe-rated materials. If the surveyor found no violence-positive materials or if the violence-positive materials constituted less than 10% of all available materials, then the mosque was categorized as containing no materials. | Yes/No | No, unless the surveyor found materials promoting *Fiqh as-Sunna*, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, *Riyadh as-Salaheen*, or works by Qutb or Mawdudi. Other materials were subject to a secondary review. |
| Imam recommended studying texts promoting violence | Following the prayer service, the surveyor asked the following question: "Do you recommend the study of: (a) only the Qur'an and/or Sunna; (b) *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*; (c) *Fiqh as-Sunna*; (e) *Reliance of the Traveller*; or (f) the works of Qutb, such as *Milestones*, and Maududi, such as *The Meaning of the Qur'an*?" If the imam or lay leader recommended studying any of the materials mentioned above except the Qur'an and/or Sunna, then the imam or lay leader was recorded as having recommended the study of texts promoting the rated material. | Yes/No | No. |
| Promoted joining terrorist organization[5] | If materials available on mosque premises promoted joining a known terrorist organization, such as "mujahideen" engaged in jihad abroad, then the mosque was recorded as having promoted joining a terrorist organization. | Yes/No | Yes |
| Promoted financial support of terror | If materials available on mosque premises promoted the financial support of terrorism, jihadists, or terrorist organizations, then the mosque was recorded as having promoted the financial support of terror. Examples include materials that made explicit calls to support mujahideen abroad or families of Palestinian suicide bombers. | Yes/No | Yes |
| Openly collected money at the mosque for a known terrorist organization | If materials available on mosque premises indicated that speakers came to the mosque to raise money for specific terrorist organizations, then the mosque was recorded as having openly collected money at the mosque for a known terrorist organization. | Yes/No | Yes |
| Promoted establishment of the Islamic caliphate in the U.S. | If materials available on mosque premises promoted establishing the Islamic Caliphate in the United States, then the mosque was recorded as having promoted the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate in the U.S. | Yes/No | Yes |
| Praised terror against the West | If materials available on mosque premises praised engaging in acts of violence against the West or praised acts of terrorism previously committed against the West, then the mosque was recorded as having praised terror against the West. | Yes/No | Yes |
| Mosque invited guest imams or preachers known to have promoted violent jihad | If materials available at the mosque indicated that the mosque had invited a guest imam or other guest speaker who is known to have promoted violent jihad, then the mosque was recorded as having invited guest imams or preachers known to have promoted violent jihad. | Yes/No | Yes |
| Promoted violent jihad | If any of the materials featured on mosque property promoted engaging in terrorist activity; promoted the financial support of terrorism or jihadists; promoted the use of force, terror, war, and violence to implement Shari'a; promoted the idea that oppression and subversion of Islam should be changed by deed first, then by speech, then by faith; praised acts of terrorism against the West; or praised suicide bombers against Israelis, then the mosque was recorded as having promoted violent jihad. | Yes/No | Yes |

[1] According to Islamic jurisprudence, Shari'a adherence can be measured across several normative axes, such as obligatory-prohibited, recommended-discouraged, and simply permissible. In theory, every act of a Shari'a-adherent Muslim falls within one of the normative categories—that is, there is no behavior outside of Shari'a. For purposes of this survey, the authors have chosen, except where indicated by notation, the obligatory-prohibited and the recommended-discouraged or recommended-permissible axes, which we have demarcated Shari'a-adherent/non- Shari'a-adherent, respectively.

[2] If a mosque, on the basis of materials observed by the surveyor, was recorded as having: (a) promoted violent jihad; (b) promoted joining a terrorist organization; (c) promoted financial support of terror; (d) collected money openly at the mosque for a known terrorist organization; (e) promoted establishing the Caliphate in the U.S.; (f) praised terror against the West; (g) distributed memorabilia featuring jihadists or terrorist organizations; or (h) invited imams or preachers who are known to have promoted violent jihad, then the materials that the surveyor relied on to record the presence of this material were subject to a secondary review by a committee of three subject-matter experts. This secondary review was collected and reviewed by the experts evaluating the materials independently of one another. A consensus view of two of the three experts was required to confirm the surveyor's observation. In 63 percent of the cases, the materials were so explicit in their promotion, praise, or support for the above behaviors that the committee's decision was unanimous. In no instance was there not a consensus and agreement with the surveyor's observation.

[3] The different legal schools vary on whether a beard is obligatory or preferable; they also differ on whether the beard for purposes of fiqh is only the chin hairs or also the lateral hairs of the sideburns and cheeks; and they differ on the minimum required length before trimming is permitted. The majority view, taking into account all schools and the Salafist opinions, is that a full beard is Sunna (following the behavior of Muhammad) and if not obligatory, preferable. For purposes of this survey, the full beard, trimmed or not, was considered Shari'a-adherent and a chin beard or no beard, was considered as non-Sunna, and in the survey's lexicon, non-adherent.

[4] While wearing a watch on the right hand is not strictly speaking a Shari'a requirement, during the preparation of the methodology of this survey, the authors identified literature at several mosques attended by Salafists advocating the wearing of a watch on the right hand for two reasons: not to wear jewelry on the left hand to follow the mode of dress of Muhammad, who, based upon certain Sunna, did not wear jewelry on his left hand; and to avoid dressing in the way of non-Muslims. The authors decided to add this observation to determine whether this behavior translated into observance by the more fundamentalist Salafists. They also observed that the 12 imams who wore the watch on the right hand were right handed.

[5] All of the materials characterized from this point to the end of the survey were dated or produced prior to September 11, 2001 but were still available or sold by the mosque in prominent fashion.

## METHODOLOGY

**Sampling:** The survey analyzed data collected from a random sample of 100 mosques. This sample size provided sufficient statistical power to find a statistically significant association between most of the selected Shari'a-adherent behaviors and violence-positive variables. Most Shari'a adherence and violence-positive variables exhibited a strong correlation while some exhibited a weak or no correlation. A sample size of 100 mosques also allowed the survey to extrapolate to all mosques in the United States at a 95 percent confidence interval with a margin of error of +/-9.6 percent.

The survey was developed by using state-by-state estimates of the Muslim population extracted from the only extant such survey.[30] This was then used to create a listing of all states whose Muslim population represented at least 1 percent of the estimated total United States Muslim population. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia ("15 randomly selected states") were randomly selected from the final listing to accommodate limits on physical logistics and personnel resources for the actual survey.

For each of the fourteen states and D.C., cities with the highest estimated concentrations of Muslims were identified, and mosques within those areas were eventually selected. The survey combined the data on 1,209 mosques listed in "The Mosque in America: A National Portrait"[31] with the data on the 1,659 mosques obtained online from Harvard's Pluralism Project,[32] with duplicates eliminated. Mosques were excluded from the list if there were indications that they were no longer operating, with a final site list yielding a total of 1,401 potential mosques for the survey.

The dates and prayer times for visiting mosques were also randomly selected. If a mosque was found to be closed, abandoned, or not at the address listed, then the next mosque that appeared on the randomized list for that city was visited. When the dominant language of the subject mosque was determined to be other than English, such as Arabic, Urdu, or Farsi, the surveyor who visited the mosque was fluent in that language. Each mosque was visited twice, once between May 18, 2007, and December 4, 2008 ("Survey Period"), and then again between May 10, 2009, and May 30, 2010 ("Audit Period"). The results of the Audit Period confirmed the findings in the Survey Period in all but nine mosques.

**Data Collection:** A surveyor visited a subject mosque in order: (a) to observe and record 12 Shari'a-adherent behaviors of the worshipers and the imam (or lay leader); (b) to observe whether the mosque contained the selected materials rated as moderate and severe; (c) to observe whether the mosque contained materials promoting, praising, or supporting violence or violent jihad; and (d) to observe whether the mosque contained materials indicating the mosque had invited guest speakers known to have promoted violent jihad. (See Appendix A for a more detailed presentation of the survey variables and methodology.)

Thus, the survey only examined the presence of Shari'a-adherent behaviors, the presence of violence-positive materials in mosques, whether an imam would promote the study of violence-positive materials, and whether a mosque was used as a forum to promote violent jihad. Since there is no central body to which all mosques belong, it was difficult to ascertain that the sampling universe list was complete. This may have introduced bias into the sampling although the authors find no evidence of any systemic distortions.

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