This dissertation focuses on the military facet of jihad, and madrasas from strategic and political perspectives to see how they have been used under strategic and political interests of different state and non-state actors in Islamic world. Given the fact that jihad is a religious doctrine of war revealed in Quran, its execution always have necessitated an required religious justification and validation by highly established Islamic religious institutions. Thus, viewed in this light, this assessment affords considerable attention towards those madrasas that as important religious institutions are used as tools to provide Islamic legal rulings, fatwas, to political, strategic and security policies of state and non-state actors throughout Islamic history. Consequently, analysing from this angle, this dissertation adopts the historicist approach in which it will emphasise importance of jihad and madrasa history in order to understand historical changes and demonstrate their potential role as tools to justify strategies and security policy patterns of state and non-state actors in Islamic world.

For any significance analysis on jihad, one must understand what makes jihad as appealing force in Islamic societies and also must have knowledge of why jihad in some Islamic societies has remained as potential influential force and religious ordain whereas in some other Islamic societies its role remained modest or futile. Thus, in order to demonstrate an empirical analysis on how jihad and madrasas shape strategic preference of particular Islamic states, this assessment by referring to two Islamic states, Afghanistan and Pakistan, discusses the degree to which jihad and madrasas as variable can be used to explain strategic cultures and specific outcomes in defence policies of these two nations.

This study is based on analytical research framework. It will primarily use the source of literature of past discussion. The most important reason for relying on this kind of literature is to make the changing role and status of madrasas and jihad clear in the way in which they have remained key in making strategic preference to state and non-state actors throughout Islamic history. Secondly, this dissertation also utilises primary resources such as news, governmental and non-governmental or inter-governmental reports, as well as interviews conducted during the field research in Afghanistan.

The hackneyed concept of jihad has become one of the most debated subjects of security studies in the Western world. Particularly since the 9/11 terrorists attacks on the US, the
epistemological understanding as well as the moral and legal legitimacy of jihad has become one of the main bones of contention within and between the West and Islamic world. This is not to say that jihad, particularly in its military meaning, was not an important theme in earlier times. In fact, since the dawn of Islam in the early 7th century, it occupied a prominent place within the Islamic military discourse. In the contemporary world, jihad has become a multidimensional, elastic concept that is employed in furtherance of the military interests of various state and non-state actors. This is achieved in large part through religious justifications of such acts through certain madrasas around the Islamic world. The possibility of constructing equally convincing but contradictory readings of the primary sources of Islam enable Muslim scholars or activists across the globe to promote their own reading of jihad in line with their socio-political and ideological stances. This phenomenon led every Muslim to perceive jihad based on his/her perception, analysis, and interests. Consequently, each Muslim scholar interpreted jihad referring to different passage, different context in Quran as well as to cherry-picked decontextualized Islamic historical events, wars.

In fact, what is important under this assessment is not to add another analysis on religious perception of jihad and madrasa or characterise between the righteous or erroneous interpretations and implication, but rather, what is important is to understand how they have been strategically and politically used as tools by state and non-state actors in which madrasas played key role in providing religious justification to strategic and political loaded wars. For example, mullahs through madrasas and mosques advocated the US and its allies led war against Soviets as righteous religious war in Afghanistan and Pakistan during the Cold War. Subsequently, this trend was employed by state and non-state Islamic extremists in furtherance to mobilise politically loaded strategic interests. Particularly, given the importance that international terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIL play significant role in shaping modern politics, strategies and security structures, it is important to understand how and why jihad was chosen by many Islamic and non-Islamic actors as tool to manipulated desired political and strategic interests, particularly since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

The contemporary analysis and perceptions of jihad are mainly if not in general demonstrate Huntington’s extreme negative analysis of Islam as unanimous bellicose cultural unit against the West. The works and rhetoric of Muslim extremists, political and terrorist leaders such as Qutb, Ladin, and Zawahiri may have inspired scholars such as Huntington, Ibn Warraq, and Lincoln. However, irrespective of the their important roles as godfathers of the contemporary proliferating multidimensional jihad, one must also observe political and strategic backgrounds under which each of these leaders have emerged as strong influential religious figures who could successfully convince some groups of Muslims by their vision and interpretation of jihad. In this context, this assessment is a significant endeavour that offers a different angle of analysis of jihad and madrasa. It evaluates jihad and madrasas from a strategic perspective in which it emphasises that jihad and madrasas have been variable potential forces that have been used as tool to serve strategic interests of different state and non-state actors within Islamic world. It will also provide a new window of analysis on the way in which it demonstrates that jihad and madrasas within Islamic world played important role to depict religious justification for cultural, strategic, and politically motivated wars, let alone as an anti-Western force, which is general consideration in the contemporary academia.

For Muslim leaders to pursue strategic, political, cultural or economically loaded wars, it is necessary to pledge Muslims, particularly those who have strong affinity towards Islam that the way in which they are fighting is righteous and thus it is religiously justified. Viewing from this perspective, this assessment is a significant endeavour to demonstrate that jihad and madrasas must not only seen from a religious perspective, rather broader analysis, particularly the strategic and political aspects of jihad and madrasas are key to understand how they play important role in shaping strategic preference and defence policies of state and non-state actors in Islamic world.

What matters under this assessment is to promote madrasas to retain their conventional roles as centres of education. Also, when analysing contemporary jihad, one must not merely
observe non-state Islamic groups as sole perpetrators of self portrayed jihads, rather one should also effort considerable attention towards Islamic states that share greater role in the contemporary strategic and political loaded jihads. Thus, the solution to end the contemporary jihad, which has emerged as an elastic variable force of carnage by non-state Islamic terrorist groups, cannot be achieved through military discourses against terrorist groups, rather serious political discourses against Islamic states in general is essential. This is largely because, generally states have greater militarily, politically and economic powers and authorities than non-state actors in the contemporary Islamic world.

The Islamic communities not only have failed to construct an exemplary and ideal Islamic state to compete dominant Western statehood, but also they have failed to gain higher objectives of Islam – sustaining justice, peace, equality, human rights, and human brotherhood – within Islamic world. The question thus rises, who has the power to make things move within Islamic world? How to bring significant changes in religious and political spheres within an Islamic state? Given the fact that almost all of the Islamic states are alleged with series of corruption charges, feudalism, authoritarianism, and dictatorship as well as failure of public led movements against such institutions like ‘Arab Spring’, there is a fundamental need for flurry of initiatives, away from the faith that expresses itself in history, to reform Muslim communities in the way in which to revisit Islamic knowledge within the context of modernity, advanced technology and the contemporary intelligence. Otherwise, as far as the present trend persists in countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, jihad and madrasas will continue to be employed in furtherance to mobilise strategic and political interests of state and non-state actors and thus, they can be used as variable to explain strategic cultures of such states.

Remark: The summary of the dissertation should be written on A4-size pages and should not exceed 4,000 Japanese characters. When written in English, it should not exceed 1,500 words.