The Rhetorical Foundation of Militant Jihad

Sudhanshu Sarangi and David Canter
Centre for Investigative Psychology, The University of Liverpool

Synopsis: *Radical, violent Islam or 'Militant Jihad' derives its authority from a particular set of interpretations of Islamic texts. An understanding of the essence of these interpretations helps to distinguish the views of militant jihadis from those of moderate Muslims. Important jihadi writings were therefore reviewed to establish a set of criteria that characterise the religious rhetoric of militant jihadis. These criteria are: a) a dismissal of the dominant, interpretative role of Islamic jurists by emphasising a literal interpretation of sacred texts with the stated objective of restoring the golden age of the Islam (salaf) b) establish the sovereignty of God and rule by 'sharia' in the entire world c) a clear and uncompromising break with all existing or past forms of manmade systems d)to convert non-believers or ask then to accept an inferior citizen status; if they agree to neither, killing them would be justified on the grounds of faith alone e) women are inherently less favoured by God and are fundamentally seductive, so they must be segregated and limitations imposed on the interaction between sexes to maintain society's moral fabric. f) The establishment of Islamic rule is the responsibility of an enlightened vanguard, who must wage a jihad against the domestic apostate rulers and foreign infidel enemies. However, the arguments for the overthrow of the world order through an unlimited, un-conditional and violent jihad do not have really thorough roots in Islamic jurisprudence and the great majority of Muslims, who are moderate, do not accept the rhetoric, objectives and methods of the jihadis.*

Introduction

Islam asks its believers to follow five basic pillars of faith and action (*arkân al-islâm)*:

1. There is no deity except Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah (*shahâdah)*
2. Performing five ritual prayers a day *(salât)*
3. Giving Alms (*zakât)*
4. Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan every year (*sawm)*
5. Performing a pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime (*hajj)*.

All Muslims agree on these five pillars of faith and are guided by one essential, immutable and binding scripture- 'the Holy Quran'. However, despite the fact that all Muslims believe in one God, the supremacy of the Quran and offer prayer in Arabic, interpretations and attitudes among the believers of Islam have historically shown a great degree of divergence, not limited to the widely known differences between the Sunni and Shia streams of Islamic faith. Rhetorically one group may call another 'heretics' even justifying punishment and retribution resulting in bloodshed.

Had the *Jihadi* claims that their version of Islam is the only true, legitimate or pure Islam, been merely intellectual articulation or religious discourse Muslims and non-Muslims could have ignored them, but in recent years *jihadi* rhetoric has underpinned death and destruction on an unprecedented scale creating concern for the stability and security of the world.

Absence of a proper understanding of the *jihadi* expression of Islam has led to many misconceptions. First, there is the belief that Islamic Jihad is a new ideology, or that the radical trend originated in the context of the Afghan war (1978-89). In fact the radical tendency can be traced back at least to the writings of medieval jurists like Taqi al-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), eighteenth century evangelist Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1791) and in modern times Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949), Mawlana abu al-Ala Mawdudi (1903-1979), Muhammad Ilyas (1885-1944), Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) and many others. Both of the leaders of Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahari inherited well known ideological positions. They are not the intellectual founding fathers of radical Islam.

Secondly, it is often assumed that Islam is a homogenous religion, which has an intrinsic core that motivates Muslims to indulge in violence and disruption or makes them intolerant towards other faiths. Many even believe that we are witnessing, what Huntington (1998) has called 'a clash of civilization' in which two monolithic world views are facing each other like prize-fighters. Such a perspective undervalues the many distinctions within the heterogeneity of this vast and multi-faceted world religion, the second largest after Christianity with around 1.5 billion faithful.

Part of the confusions about Islam arise from the fact that as essentially God-fearing people, all of whom respect the central messages of the Quran, most Muslims are loathe to do or say anything that implies a criticism of their religion. Most are therefore reluctant to take sides with those perceived as the enemies of Islam. Those moderates, who feel the need to defend Islam, have been trying to explain that the '*jihadi*' interpretation is a false or wrong interpretation of Islam and that it is unfair for Islam to be blamed for the belief or the work of a few extremists. However, careful consideration of the fundamentals of Islam does open the possibility that the *jihadi* interpretation is neither an accidental nor a false interpretation of Islam. It is just one of a number of possible interpretations of the religion and not the most authoritative.

A crucial principle in Islam stated in *Quran II: 256*[*] is*:*
'There shall be no compulsion in religion'
This is taken to mean that ultimately accepting or rejecting an interpretation is left to the conscience the believers. They alone decide at an individual level what expresses the true will of God. This allows Muslims to subscribe to many alternative positions making the religion far more pluralistic than is often assumed. Within this variety of opinions a majority of Islamic scholars and Muslims the world over do not subscribe to the *jihadi* interpretation.

A third misunderstanding is to view *Al Qaeda* as a synonym for militant *Jihad*. *Al Qaeda* is neither the first nor the only *jihadi* organisation in the world. The emphasis on Al Qaeda as the core of militant *jihad* ignores the many other militant Islamic groups that have existed in many non-Western societies over the last century. For example, Egypt has had to cope with violent *jihadis* for more than 60 years. It was cadres from the previously existing Egyptian Groups: Egyptian Islamic Jihad (*al-jihad islamiya*), Egyptian Islamic Group (*jamma islamiyya*), who joined with Mujahideens from Arab, Maghreb, South and Central Asia and the Far East to create Al Qaeda in the late 1980's (Sageman, 2004; Gunaratna, 2002). Furthermore, *Jihadi* movements have been active in many countries including Algeria, Indonesia, Chechnya, Pakistan and India and these organisations share similar ideological positions, are equally

---

[*] All quotations from the Quran are from the Penguin translation by N.J.Dawood (2003)

2

dangerous and have been responsible for equal or more deaths than those attributed to *Al Qaeda*.

Although most of the regional *jihadi* movements are now overshadowed by the dominant presence of *Al Qaeda* they had no difficulty in supporting or joining Al Qaeda's World Islamic Front for *Jihad* against Jews, Crusaders and others, created by a fatwa issued on Feb 23, 1998 signed by Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri, Abu-Yasir Ahmad Taha, Mir Hamzah and Fazlur Rahman (bin-Laden, 2005) and in accepting Al Qaeda's leadership. The World Islamic Front for Jihad is an umbrella organisation of *jihadis* from Kashmir, Chechnya, Indonesia, Algeria, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Palestine for collaboration and unity. Though, the front appears to exist more as a networking concept and less as an organisation with identifiable structures.

A fourth misunderstanding is the attempt to place various movements and groups in the context of regional and national boundaries. *Jihad* is a negation of the notion of nationalism. It is misleading to assume that a *jihadi* in Britain will have a different rhetoric or agenda from a *jihadi* in Egypt, Kashmir or Chechnya. As Sayyid Qutb (2007) has argued, 'a Muslim has no nationality except his belief' (p.118). The word *ummah* in Arabic refers to the Muslim community regardless of differences of tribe and territory and is not related to any issue of national self-determination or the notion of a modern nation state as traditionally understood in Western political theory.

The Jurists and the Activists:

Unlike Canonical Law, 'Islamic Law was never supported by an organized power' as Schacht (1991, p.2) a leading scholar on the subject, has stated. There is no church in Islam and no priesthood of the kind known to Christianity. Islamic law precedes the Islamic state. A Mosque is a private (non-state) institution. Thus, in theory at least, no one has any superior authority to interpret the religion. As a result 'Islamic Law', Schacht (1991, p.3) argues, 'was never 'uniform at any point of its development' . Interpretation of the religion is provided by religious scholars who are called variously *alim* (or *ulama*), *faqih*, *mulla*, *shaykh* or *Imam*. They give their authoritative opinions (*fatwas)* on what is required (*wajib*) to be done, what is forbidden (*haram*), what is recommended (*mandub*), what is disapproved (*makruh*) or what is merely permitted (*mubah*). Since the jurists do not have the backing of state power it is ultimately left to each individual Muslim to decide from his/her conscience whether a *fatwa* represents the will of God or not. *Fatwas* "carry persuasive authority, but they are not mandatory or binding", as has been argued by leading Islamic jurist Khaled Abou El-Fadl (1988, p.28) of the UCLA School of Law.

Despite being a sacred law, Islamic Law was created by a process of rational interpretation to introduce religious standards and moral values. Secondly, Schacht (1991, p.4) argues it 'possesses a pronounced private and individualistic character'. During the Umayyad period, about the beginning of the second Islamic century, schools of jurisprudence developed in various important centres of Islam like Iraq and Medina with each school depending on, what Schacht (1991) has described their own living tradition'. These traditions were established from opinions on important subjects of the day and on varied degree of emphasis on different roots of jurisprudence or *usul al-fiqh*. Though some of these schools have now become extinct, there are four extant schools called *Madhhab* in Sunni Islam; Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi and Hanbali. Similarly the Jafari and Zaydi schools guide the Shi'is and the

Ismaili school survives among the Ismailis in India (Ziadeh, 1995; Schacht, 1991; Coulson, 1994)

Jurists are trained in the three main sources of Islamic law. First and foremost is the holy *Quran* which Muslims believe, represents God's words as revealed to Prophet Muhammad and is a literal oral tradition. The second is the *Sunnah,* which is also an oral tradition that roughly refers to traditions or rule by analogy; what Prophet Muhammad and his four Companions 'said' or 'did not say' or 'did' or 'did not do'. Individual instances of the precedents are reported in the third source, the *Hadith*. Besides studying these sources, jurists are trained in methodologies for considering evidence and general principles of jurisprudence like principles of equity, public interest and general custom. Because of the interpretative nature of legal opinion multiplicity was expected and tolerated with respect. As stated by Ziadeh (1995) the *Hanafis* make liberal use of opinion in their formulations and are often called 'People of Opinion' as opposed to other schools that rely on traditions of the Prophet and are called 'People of Traditions'.

Taken together the three sources of law, all the legal opinions of the different schools of thought, along with procedural law (methodologies for considering evidence) and broad legal principles, are collectively called *Shari'a*. After many years of education in a school of jurisprudence, Fadl (2006) reports that the scholars receive licences or permission (*ijazas)* from several established jurists before being accepted themselves as jurists. Thus, the jurists are carefully trained to interpret the law and are thus nearly always well respected.

The jurisprudential tradition of interpretative law was challenged by the Hanabali jurist Ibn Taymiyya, who lived at a time of the Mongol conquest of the Abbasid Empire in 1258. Taymiyya blamed the fall of the Caliphate on a corruption in Islamic society brought on by interpretative and speculative readings and innovations (*bidah)* as opposed to what he viewed was the desirable method of a simple literal following of the Quran and the Sunnah. He wanted Muslims to restore the glory of Islam and the golden age when Prophet Muhammad and his four Companions ruled over Medina by following the pure form of Islam as represented in the Quran and the Sunnah and practised by the Prophet and his Companions. Taymiyya, thus, led the foundation for a revivalist movement that sought to go back to the fundamentals of the Quran for restoring the Golden age of Islam, the *Salaf* (the ancient period when Prophet Muhammad and his four Companions ruled over Medina). This preaching of the *Salaf* or *Salafiyyah*, as it is called, is the core of the contemporary Global Salafi *jihad*.

Inspired by Taymiyya, the opposition to jurists became a key component of the discourse of modern *jihadi* activists like Hasan al-Banna and Sayeed Qutb, who argued that the Companions drank from the pure spring of Quran and Hadith unlike subsequent generations who used mixed sources including, as Qutb (2007) writes, 'Greek philosophy and logic, ancient Persian legends and their ideas, Jewish scriptures and traditions, other religions and civilizations' (p. 17). The jurists had tried to be creative and intellectual, argued the activists. Faraj (1986), one of the most influential of *jihadi* ideologues, describes, thus:

> "The most reliable Speech is the Book of God, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad, may God's peace be upon him. The worst of all things are novelties, since every novelty is an innovation (*bidah*) and every innovation is a deviation, and all deviation is in Hell."(p.160)

The activists downplayed the need to seek the guidance of jurists since all can read the Quran and the *Sunnah* and can understand God's will and decide for themselves (though the activists miss no opportunity to selectively quote from jurists as authorities to support their own claims). They propose that, fundamentally, every individual is equally competent to understand God's will as expressed in the Quran and the Sunnah without unnecessary intellectualisation. This readiness for anyone to interpret the *Hadith* and issue a *fatwa* (more so in the age of the internet) is illustrated by Osama bin-Laden and his likes. Bin-Laden attended the Management and Economics School at King Abd al-Aziz University in Jeddah and his deputy al-Zawahiri was trained as a physician; neither had any formal jurisprudential training or the necessary license to issue any *fatwa*.

The literalist view of Islam undermined the guiding role of the jurists and the appropriation of the religious tradition by activists for the purpose of what Kepel (2006) has called 'political Islam'. The activists were not bound by jurisprudential traditions with regard to procedural law and legal principles like equity and greater public good. Fadl (2006) argues, the activists indulge in 'Hadith-hurling' i.e. widely quoting supporting precedents/ traditions in a selective way without considering the broader jurisprudential principles to advocate violence, revenge and disruption; a process, he describes, as a 'great theft' of the soul of Islam and a negation of what Islam fundamentally stands for; peace and brotherhood.

Qutb (2007) was opposed to the discourse in Islam being intellectualised, because Islam, he claimed, was for practical guidance that included a political programme. A Muslim was to translate Quranic instructions into action. He argued that the generations after the Companions used the 'instruction for academic discussion and enjoyment'.(p.19) In short, Qutb and the activists advocate a philosophy of Praxis more commonly associated with Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci (1995). Even before Qutb, Maulana Mawdudi(1903-1979), the founder of Jamaat-i-Islami in un-divided India and Hasan al-Banna(1906-1949), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt had used Islam for advocating radical political action (Kepel, 2006; Adams, 1983).

As Nettler (1995) points out, the Wahabi movement and the Saudi state that emerged from that movement have been deeply influenced by the ideas of Hanbali jurist Ibn Taymiyah, particularly the emphasis on a literalist interpretation of the Quran and the Sunnah and the conception of Medina as the model for an Islamic state or *salaf*. Hanbali is the official school of jurisprudence of the Saudi state. The Saudi political and religious elite use their financial power to export their ideas around the world. Osama bin-Laden and the Mujahedeens fighting in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union enjoyed patronage and official approval of the Saudi state and the Saudi religious elite. Saudi Arabia was also one of the three states to recognise and establish full diplomatic ties with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan; the other two countries being United Arab Emirates and Pakistan. The Wahabis of Saudi Arabia have funded Madrassas, Mosques and academic activities to propagate their brand of Islam around the world. Wahabism has been a clear foundation for militant *jihad*, though since about 1989, the Council of Senior Ulamma of Saudi Arabia has issued *fatwas* supporting the views of the Saudi regime, who are now at odds with bin-Laden over stationing American forces on Saudi soil in the wake of operation Desert Storm (1990-91) and the latter has retaliated with *fatwas* issued under the auspices of the Advisory Reform Committee, based in London declaring *jihad* against the religious-political elite of Saudi Arabia (bin-Laden, 2005).

The militant jihadis come from many Islamic streams and not only from Wahabism. The Taliban grew out of the Madrassa network of Dar al-ulum Deoband, the largest Islamic seminary in the world based in India and Pakistan. Most of the Taliban cadres came from Deoband affiliated Madrassas in the North-West of Pakistan and believed in an extreme form of Deobandism preached in these Madrassas and the Training camps for Afghan Mujahedeens (Ahmed Rashid, 2002). The Taliban fugitive chief Mullah Umar and the Chief of Pakistan-based Kashmiri *jihadi* group Jaish-e-Mohammad, Maulana Masud Azhar, were the product of the Binouri Madrasa in Karachi, which is the largest Deobandi Madrassa in Pakistan. As discussed by Metcalf (1995) the Deobandi Madrassa teaches *hadith* and the Hanafi legal tradition, while adhering to Sufism for personal transformation with the help of spiritual guidance. But, Rashid(2002) is right in suggesting that the Taliban brand of Deobandism is a rather extreme example of Deobandi Islam.

The ideologues of militant jihad mostly come from the religio-political elite in society and are well educated and articulate. Mawdudi was an influential journalist and editor of *al-Jamiah.* Hasan al-Banna graduated from the Dar al-Ulum College in Cairo, much like Sayyid Qutb after him, and went on to become a well respected teacher. Qutb was a senior official in the education department in Egypt. Dr. Abdullah Azzam, the founder of Al Qaeda, had earned a doctorate in Islamic Jurisprudence from Egypt's al-Azhar university and was a Professor before joining *jihad* in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. Osama bin-laden belonged to one of the richest families in the middle-east and went to the Management and Economics School at King Abd al-Aziz University in Jeddah. Al-Zawahiri went to the Medical School in Cairo University and was a trained physician. The *jihadis* come from different Islamic traditions, but agree on a simple literal following of the *Quran* and the *Sunnah*.

Establishing God's Rule and destruction of manmade systems

The theological foundation of Islam is based on accepting the monotheistic declaration *'La ilha illa Allah'* 'There is no deity but God' *(tawhid)*. This principle also means that rule and sovereignty or *'hakimiyah'* belong only to God (*la hukm wa la siyadah ila lillah*). Qutb (2007), one of the most representative and influential activists, argues:

> "The earth belongs to God and should be purified for Him unless the banner, 'No deity except God', is unfurled across the earth. Man is servant to God alone, and he can remain so only if he unfurls the banner…..no sovereignty except God's, no law except from God, and no authority of one man over another, as the authority in all respects belong to God."(p.26)

The sacred law (the *Shari'a*) embodies God's will and humans must completely and fully submit to the law. The consistent argument from ibn Taymiyya to al-Zawahiri is that Muslims have been made weak because they have diverted from God's path, and allowed themselves to be ruled by Western, mixed and man made laws, in effect, creating *jahili* societies that are ignorant of or have deviated from God's commandments. If Ibn Taymiyya blamed the fall of the Abbasid Empire to the lack of Quranic rule, the later activists blame the defeat in the six-day war with Israel in 1967 and the continued 'weakness' of the Muslim *ummah* to the failure to establish Sharia law and forge Muslim unity. They argue that there is no need for human laws since God has already expressed His will in the form of the *shar'ia* and that the attempt by humans to give themselves a law is heretical and is against God's will. Only once a group of people who bow to God alone gain control over society (build a

theocratic society) they may formulate practical laws. However, in no case is any rule by another human being or group of persons acceptable because that is *Shirk,* ascribing the attributes, power or authority of God to others besides Him and/or worshipping others besides Him.

When a Prime Minister or President is duly elected, submitting to his rule will be *Shirk* and un-Islamic. A revolt against his rule will be an appropriate religious duty. A law cannot become legitimate because it is framed by representatives elected by a majority. Javid Eqbal (1983), explaining what he sees as the Islamic position on democracy, states "In an Islamic state the people are not vested with ultimate sovereignty" and "the only principle operative is the supremacy of Islamic law"(p.253). Neither any majority nor any minority can have the power to make laws after God has expressed the law in no uncertain terms. Legitimacy belongs to God alone, not humans. The activists neither want Western-style democracy nor Western-style nation states as is brought out in the writings of Mawdudi and Qutb. They want a theocracy in the entire world where there is rule of the *Sharia* and all human relationships are based on, what they argue, equality subjugated to God alone.

The establishment of God's rule is opposed physically by the enemies of Islam and the goal is, as al-Zawahiri (2006, p. 135) explains, to "topple the Government and establish an Islamic state" and secondly, fight against "the Jewish-US alliance". This two-fold distinction between the enemies are integral to the *jihadi* rhetoric as is articulated in the writings of Faraj (1986) , al-Zawahiri (2006) and others and analysed by Marc Sageman (2004) and others. It is a distinction between firstly the foreign enemy, or 'far enemy'; the Infidels (the Crusaders, Zionists and others) who occupy/colonise Muslim land and subjugate Muslims, or prop-up un-Islamic, apostate regimes by proxy; America being described as the 'head of the snake'. Secondly, the domestic apostate rulers, or near enemy, who prevent or fail to establish the Government by Islamic *Shariah* and collaborate with the Infidels- Crusaders, the Zionists and others, repressing Muslims and disseminating Western values.

The early activists were focussed on the 'far enemy' and 'imperialism'; but the later activists like Faraj (1986) argued:

> "The basis of the existence of Imperialim in the lands of Islam are (precisely) these rulers. To begin by putting an end to imperialism is not a laudatory and not a useful act. It is only a waste of time. We must concentrate on our own Islamic situation: we have to establish the Rule of God supreme….There is no doubt that the first battlefield for *jihad* is the extermination of these infidel leaders and to replace them by a complete Islamic Order. From here we should start." (p.193)

Faraj's (1986) monograph 'The Neglected Duty' is a classic exposition of the shift in focus of the *jihad* movement for which the concept of *takfir* became central. *Takfir,* literally 'pronouncement of unbelief against someone' or loosely, excommunication, was justified on the ground that the domestic rulers had failed to establish *hakimiyah* or sovereignty of God, as explained by Ibraham Karawan (1995) , Marc Sageman(2004), Gilles Kepel(2006) and others. This position was a reiteration of Qutb's (2007) characterisation of contemporary Islamic society as un-Islamic and Mawdudi's (1998) argument that *hakimiyah* was the only legitimate system. Faraj (1986) argued the domestic rulers were in apostasy and deserve to be killed.

A further principle derived from the abandonment of man-made systems is the desire to establish Islamic rule wherever possible as a springboard for spreading Islam to the rest of the world, if necessary through *hijra* (migration from a hostile un-Islamic *jahiliyyah* environment, as explained by Esposito (2002). Many of the

jihadis like bin-Laden, al-Zawahiri and others migrated to other countries to establish Islamic rule.

The *Jihadi* programme starts with the first objective of establishing a base in the heart of the Islamic world. Al-Zawahiri (2006) argues:

"Armies achieve victory only when the infantry takes hold of land. Likewise, the Mujaheed Islamic movement will not triumph against the world coalition unless it possesses a fundamentalist base in the heart of the Islamic world" (p. 214).

In a letter dated Oct 11, 2005 to al-Zarqawi, the former head of al-Qaeda in Iraq, al Zawahari lays down his programme for the Iraqi resistance in a letter:

"The first stage: Expel the Americans from Iraq.
The second stage: Establish an Islamic authority or amirate, then develop it and support it until it achieves the level of a caliphate…
The third stage: Extend the jihad wave to the secular countries neighbouring Iraq.
The fourth stage: It may coincide with what came before: the clash with Israel, because Israel was established only to challenge any new Islamic entity."(p. 255-256)

The only time the *jihadis* came close to pursuing their programme successfully was when they came to power in Afghanistan and Chechnya. The *jihadi* programme is the same whether it is for regional movements like in Chechnya, Kashmir and Algeria or the heart of the struggle in Palestine and the Arabian Peninsula: control a territory, establish Islamic rule in the territory and export *jihad* to the remaining part of the world until the rule of God and *Sharia* is established in the entire world and, as they see it, the 'struggle will continue till the day of the final judgment' i.e. for as long as it takes (e.g. Al Zawahari 2006).

The surrender of rationality

The basis of Islamic law making is the well recognised concept of '*ijtihad',* which means the exercise of independent judgment by a person with sufficient knowledge. The literalist interpretation limits the scope of independent judgment. As Fadl (2006) argues rhetorically, God gave human beings *aql,* the ability to reason. But, if the extremist view of Islamic law is to be accepted:

"God did not leave much space for human beings to apply their rational faculties since God unequivocally resolved most matters for human beings and all that is left is for humans to obey…. it would make little sense for God to reward the effort, if all God expects of us on most matters is blind obedience…..Muslims become like mechanized robots." (p. 158-159)

The scope of law making is further limited by the desire to replicate the society of earlier times to the total exclusion of all contemporary systems since the latter embody human creativity and ingenuity. Nothing of the manmade traditions, institutions and the law can be salvaged, if they are contrary to the literalist interpretation of Islam. The *shura* system of theocratic government does not contain a detailed theory of Governance and ends up at best as a just and benevolent dictatorship that functions through periodic consultation with a council of religious

scholars. Moreover, the argument of an unlikely over-throw of all rules by humans, taken to its logical conclusion, can only lead to anarchy.

The moderates are concerned that extremists are projecting Islam as a system fundamentally against the universal values of democracy and human rights. Fadl (2006) argues that Islam is not opposed to democracy, human rights and a tolerant social culture. But, such reconciliation is possible only if Islam is interpreted keeping in mind the broader jurisprudential principles of equity, historical context and the best interests of human beings (*tahqiq masalih al-'ibad*). For moderate Muslims there is no reason to give up rationality, which formed the basis of a rich and varied jurisprudential tradition of interpretative law, in favour of a literalist construction of Islam which projects the universal values of democracy, human rights and moderation as un-Islamic.

Western Culture and *Jahiliya*

Jahiliyyah (Newby, 2006, p.112) is often contrasted with the word Islam to mean all the values that are opposite to Islam, referring to the period before the rise of Islam; a state of ignorance of the divine commandments; It is the antonym of knowledge (*ilm*), good behaviour and kindness (*hilm)*. Islam is expected to have a transformative effect on the believer so that the believer emerges from the state of *jahiliya* into a world of wisdom, knowledge and morality.

The state of affairs before Allah revealed the law to Prophet Muhammad was called Jihiliya. Qutb (2007) used this *quranic* concept to characterise not merely ancient times before Islam, but the contemporary world as well. So, both the non-Muslim and contemporary Muslim societies, he called *jahili*. When an individual becomes a believer he has to, Qutb argues, make a complete break from Jahiliyyah. He has to accept divine law, oneness of God and complete submission to God. He cannot have compromises or 'give and take' with the *jahili* society. For Qutb the only source of culture, belief and practices has to be pure Quran without any dilution or influence, either Western or Oriental.

The view that there can be hybrids in the form of 'Islamic Democracy' or 'Islamic Socialism' or that with a slight change the current political and economic systems can become acceptable to Islam, to Qutb, are unnecessary attempts at appeasement, since no such compromise is possible. He argued that even the slightest non-Islamic influence can 'pollute the clear spring of Islam'. Islamic society requires a radical revolution- a clear break with current beliefs, culture and ways. People are not Muslims as long as they live the life of *Jahiliyyah* even if they perform prayer five times a day, fast during Ramadan, offer zakat and perform Haj. Qutb (2007) writes:

> "Islam cannot accept any mixing with Jahiliyyah, either in its concept or in the modes of living which are derived from this concept. Either Islam will remain, or jahiliyyah; Islam cannot accept or agree to a situation which is half-Islam and half-Jahiliyyah….Command belongs to God, or otherwise Jahiliyyah; God's Shariah will prevail, or else people's desires." (p. 130)

Qutb, then goes on to say that 'the foremost duty of Islam in this world is to depose *jahiliyyah* from the leadership of man, and to take the leadership into its own hands' (p.131). The idea that Western society is superior to the Islamic society despite its jahili character is countered by Qutb:

"Look at this capitalism with its monopolies, its usury and whatever else is unjust in it; at this individual freedom, devoid of human sympathy and responsibility for relatives except under the force of law; at this materialistic attitude which deadens the spirit; at this behaviour, like animals, which you call 'Free mixing of the sexes; at this vulgarity which you call 'emancipation of women', which are contrary to the demands of practical life; and at Islam, with its logic, beauty, humanity and happiness, which reaches the horizons to which man strives but does not reach." (p.139)

Qutb's arguments are nuanced when it comes to Western science and scholarship. Islamists accept that Muslim society needs to learn the pure sciences like Physics, Engineering, Medicine, Mathematics, and Biology in which the West has made significant progress. But Muslims must keep away from liberal arts like Political Science and Philosophy, since they contain un-Islamic ideas and are sinful. They must even keep away from any aspect of science like Darwinian Theory of evolution and Freudian Psycho-analysis which are not based on a strict empirical foundation and are opposed to Islamic beliefs.

Further, any learning on matters of faith, religion, morality and value must be from Muslims since the non-believers always conspire to turn the believer away from the latter's faith.

"*Many among the People of the Book wish, through envy, to lead you back to unbelief.*" (Quran 2:109).

"*You will please neither the Jews nor the Christians until you follow their faith.*" (Quran 2:120).

Qutb (2007) and other activists argue that Western science fought with the Church and therefore there is hostility between Religion and science in the Western world, which is turning the West against Islam as well. But Islamic Science is a part of faith and does not question faith.

The Islamists argue that there is a deliberate conspiracy for Western cultural invasion through art forms, fashion, media and the market, all of which are controlled by the West so that Muslims are separated from an appropriate puritanical cultural life. They fear that through these invasions the West will make sure that Muslim society cannot get away from *jahiliyya* and will consequently remain weak and away from the *Salaf*. Muslim society must insulate itself from all such pernicious influences and cultural invasions.

As with other fundamentalist religions, such as ultra-orthodox Jews, or the Amish in Pennsylvania, the Islamists believe they must insulate Muslims from the Global village by blocking TV channels, the Internet, most art forms and by ensuring 'intellectual insularity'. Fadl(2006) argues that the extremists have a desire just to be different as a way of assertion against modernity. For example, toothpaste is un-Islamic, which puritans claim, should not be used because Prophet Muhammad did not use it. The logic is Muslims must do everything possible to maintain a separate identity. The Islamists alienate themselves from modernity by imagining a perfect past. Fadl (2006) writes: "The more alienating modernity became, the more they idealized the past; and more idealized the past, the more undesirable the modern age became."(p. 174)

Dealing with non-believers

The second part of the declaration '*La Ilha illa Allah*' (There is no deity except Allah) is the declaration *'Muhammadar Rasul Allah'*- Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Muslims believe that Allah sent 124,000 prophets for guidance ending with Prophet Muhammad with whom the chain of prophethood and messengership ends and religion stands perfected for the entire universe. Like the great majority of religions Islam claims the only way to salvation. Therefore, it is said that people guided by the Abrahamic Prophets like Moses and David and Jesus should convert to Islam and follow the latest and the best law rather than old laws that stand abrogated by the will of God. The only way to save non-Muslims and Muslims who do not practice Islam from being damned is to convert both to true Islam and make them follow the *Shar'ia.*

Activists like Qutb, Faraj and others use the believer- nonbeliever dichotomy to turn the world into one of permanent conflict and war and this dichotomy lies at the core of the *jihadi* rhetoric. A territory in which Islamic rule is established (rule of the *Sharia*) becomes the abode of Islam or *dar al-Islam* and the rest of the world is *Dar al-Harb* or *Dar al-Kafir* (the abode of infidels). So long as *Sharia* rule is not established even a Muslim land cannot be called *dar al-Islam.*

A Muslim can have only two relationships with *Dar al-harb*; peace with a contractual agreement or war. But, even peace with contractual agreement ends on an agreed date or because of violation of contractual obligations, thereafter the relationship is only of war. A Non-Muslim, if he declines to accept Islam will be given a different status as a citizen called *dhimma* status. He will not be entitled to hold senior posts in the Government or the Army, his place of worship will be lower than a Mosque and he will pay a poll tax, called *jijiya,* though he will be exempt from paying *Zakat,* which will be compulsory for Muslims. If he refuses to be converted to Islam or violates his *dhimma* status he will be at war with the Islamic state.

Moderates like Fadl (2006) argue that the Quran does not dichotomise the world into *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb.* The only distinction made is between the abode of the Hereafter and the abode of earthly life. In fact, the moderates cite a set of verses from the Quran that talk about respect for people of the scriptures (Christianity, Judaism), often referred to as *Salam* verse.

> *"Be courteous when you argue with the People of the Book, except with those among them who do evil. Say: 'We believe in that which has been revealed to us and which was revealed to you. Our God and your God is one. To Him we submit."* *(QURAN 29:46).*

In case of any disagreement with people of other faiths, Muslims should act to assure their opponents that their disagreement is not personal, and that Muslims do not bear a grudge or enmity toward their opponent and the appropriate response is to wish their opponents the bliss of peace. (QURAN 25:63; 28:55; 43:89).

As argued by Fadl (2006) and the moderates, the Quran does not preclude the possibility that peoples of other faith, who adhere to their religion, may also attain salvation and does not support any arrogance on the part of Muslims in dealing with non-Muslims. The dispute, if any, is to be resolved by God and not humans:

> *"It is no concern of yours whether He will forgive or punish them. They are the wrongdoers…He pardons whom He will and punishes whom He pleases. God is forgiving and merciful"* (QURAN 3:128-29).

The reaction of the *jihadis* to the moderation of the Salam verses is to recite the first part of the Sword verse

"*When the sacred months are over, slay the idolaters wherever you find them. Arrest them, besiege them, and lie in ambush everywhere for them.*" (QURAN 9:5).

The sword verse is frequently quoted by the *jihadis* to justify killing of non-Muslims on the ground of faith alone. The second part of the verse, which they do not quote, says "*If they repent and take to prayer and render the alms levy, allow them to go their way. God is forgiving and merciful*".

There are many religions that call upon their believers to take to proselytising, but in modern times no one talks about proselytising with a sword. Islam also has a set of verses that advocate toleration:

" *Believers, Jews, Sabaeans and Christians – whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does what is right- shall have nothing to fear or regret*". (Quran 5:69).

A large number of other verses in the Quran advocate toleration and respect for people of other religious faith (e.g. Quran 2:62, 22:34, 3:199), but the *jihidis* disregard these verses or claim that they are not relevant to our times and have been 'abrogated' by God during *jihad*. Fadl (2006) argues that anything the *jihadis* find inconsistent with their rhetoric is dismissed so that they can avoid responsibility for acting in a manner inconsistent with the Quran. The Quran contains both the sword verses and the *salam* verses and it is a matter of emphasis and interpretation by believers which one to advocate.

Status of Women

The coming to power of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan unveiled to the world one of the worst forms of patriarchy and forced segregation of women. The *Jihadis* had shown how women are treated in the righteous Islamic State under the rule of the *Sharia* and the Muslim *ullama*. The status of women in Afghanistan under the Taliban, which pursued an extreme form of Deobandism, was very close to the puritanical Wahabi conservative standpoint on women, though the Taliban took the puritanical logic to hitherto unseen extremes. The main features of the extremist position on women are:

Firstly, God favoured men and women unequally since He wanted them to perform different duties in life. Any violation of the principle of inequality is a rebellion against God. God favoured men more than women and women should accept their status as the will of God.

Secondly, while inequality is denied to women, dignity and justice are ensured.

Thirdly, women are inherently seductive and unless men are protected from being seduced by women and vice versa, moral fabric in society will be torn apart or there will be what is called *fitnah* in society. *Fitnah* refers to a state of discord and also a trial or temptation that takes believers away from the ways of God. Unless men are protected from sexual lust they will be seduced and land up in hell. So, to protect men from being damned restrictions have to be imposed on women and on inter-mixing of sexes. Thus, by wearing the *hijab* and keeping away from the public, women can be protected from the lustful eyes of men and from being exposed to molestation and rape. Respect for women requires women not becoming objects of lust and desire for men other than their husbands by maintaining modesty in clothing and manners. These ideas connect with the view that family is the basis of society and the basis of the family is the division of labour between husband and wife. There is no greater work for women than bringing up children for which God specifically favoured women. Looking after children is the duty God gave to women and they must perform this duty faithfully.

The *jihadi* discourse claims moral superiority of Islamic society for the greater respect that women receive and for the preserving of family as an institution for the moral upbringing of society. Qutb (2007) claims:

"…if the relationship between man and woman is based on lust, passion and impulse, and the division of work is not based on family responsibility and natural gifts; if woman's role is merely to be attractive, sexy and flirtatious, and if woman is freed from her basic responsibility of bringing up children; and if, on her own or under social demand, she prefers to become a hostess or a stewardess in a hotel or ship or air company, thus spending her ability for material productivity rather than in the training of human beings,…then such a civilization is backward from the human point of view, or *'jahili'* in the Islamic terminology"(p. 98)

Much of the conservative view on status of women is influenced by the preaching of Abd al-Wahab (1703-1791) and subsequent generations of *Wahabi* Mullahs. The rhetoric is a compilation of all that can be said demeaning women; confining them to the home, placing them under the veil and justifying dominance of their male relatives. These practices are regarded as essential to maintain the moral fabric of society.

On the other hand, the view of Moderates like Fadl (2006) on the role of woman is to understand Islam in its historical context as a reform movement and to say that there is no restriction on further reform consistent with the essential principles of Islam as a religion that cares for humanity and strives for morality and beauty. They argue that one of the first acts of the Prophet was the prohibition of female infanticide. But, generally women were given various rights as a response to demands raised by them before Prophet Muhammad in course of the latter's leadership over the *umma*.

Many of these changes were revolutionary in the medieval historical context. For example in place of maintaining harems, men were asked not to marry more than four women. Buying and selling of women was declared immoral and sexual desires were brought within the institution of family for the stated reason of providing women greater economic security. Women were given maintenance rights. *'Idda'* (waiting period for a woman after divorce before she can remarry) was limited to twice, i.e., men can no longer make women wait more than twice before re-marrying. The purpose of the reform measures was to ensure that women are not repressed and are allowed to pursue the ways of God. Whenever women raised issues of repression before Prophet Muhammad he responded in a manner to stop repression. Several verses in the Quran make clear that men and women are to be treated as equal. (Quran 3: 195, 4:124, 16:97, 40:40, 33:35, 49:13 etc)

"Those who submit to God and accept true Faith; who are devout, sincere, patient, humble, charitable, and chaste; who fast and are ever mindful of God- on these, both men and women, God will bestow forgiveness and a rich recompense." (Quran 33:35)

To the extremists claim that the Islamic state should compel and coerce all women to wear the veil and maintain modesty, the moderates argue that the veil is not Islamically mandated. It should be a woman's autonomous decision whether to wear the veil or not, and that her choice be respected. Quran preaches that there ought to be no compulsion in religion. Toleration is fundamental to Islam. The use of force to

segregate women, preventing them from basic education or prohibiting them from contributing to productive activity are all 'compulsions' and hence not Islamic.

It is nonetheless misleading to suggest that the moderates have a totally Western egalitarian view of women. They still expect women to maintain a level of modesty and family value, but they do not want to keep women away from education and the workplace. They cite the case of Aisha, one of Prophet Muhammad's wives who led troops into battle and played an important role in interpreting the religion after the death of the Prophet. Even though polygamy is permitted in the Quran in the context of a warring medieval society, with the condition that a man must be able to afford it, polygamy is neither mandatory nor a religious duty. Tunisia has made Polygamy illegal on Islamic grounds i.e., Islam's egalitarian core and Turkey has banned it as part of secularism and modernity. Most other Muslim societies have used various religious interpretations to restrict Polygamy, though they have not been able to declare it illegal altogether like Tunisia and Turkey.

Jihad and Terrorism

The revival of the *'Salaf'*, the establishment of the rule by the *'Sharia'*, the clear break from *'jahiliya'*, over-throwing the rule by humans, are the duty of all human beings on whose behalf a vanguard assumes responsibility. The preferred method of the vanguard is *dawah* (peaceful missionary preaching) so that people can be transformed out of *Jahiliya* to accept the rule of God alone. But, *dawah* threatens the established domestic as well as international order, making repression of the vanguard inevitable. The jihadis argue that even when the vanguard has an electoral victory as with Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya in Algeria in 1992 or Hamas's victory in the 2006 Palestine election; it will not be accepted by the world order. Thus, a pre-requisite for the revival of the *Salaf* is the annihilation of all physical opposition from a) domestic apostate rulers repressing the vanguard, b) infidels sponsoring the apostate regimes by proxy or by occupation, and c) the Crusaders, the Zionists and others who have declared war against the Muslim *ummah.* So, in defence the vanguard has to fight against all oppositions and launch an armed struggle, which they call *'jihad'* using a Quranic concept.

The initial focus of the Jihad Movement was the 'defence of Muslim Land' from occupation by non-Muslims. Dr Abdullah Azam(2008), Jordanian religious scholar of Palestinian descent and founder of al-Qaeda and one of the founders of Hamas, who is generally described as the 'Emir or Godfather of global *jihad'* (Esposito, 2002, p.7)*,* issued a fatwa against the Russians after they invaded Afghanistan in 1979 titled "Defence of the Muslim Lands: the first obligation after *Iman."* *Iman* refers to 'both an inner state' and an 'outward expression' as a 'proof of faith'(Newby, 2006, p.100). Azam's fatwa was supported by Abd al-Aziz Bin Bazz, then Chief Mufti of the Council of Senior Ullama of Saudi Arabia. So, *jihad* is a fundamental religious duty of all Muslims, almost a sixth pillar of faith. Azam (2008) starts his *fatwa* with a quotation from Ibn Taymiya: "The first obligation after *Iman* is the repulsion of the enemy aggressor who assaults the religion and the worldly affairs". (p.1)

The position that *jihad* is a duty to fight foreign occupation, as argued by Azam, is different from the primary focus of the Egyptian groups like the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and Egyptian Islamic Group on the apostasy of domestic rulers and *takfir.* Faraj,

for example extensively quotes Ibn Taymiyah's *fatwas* in his 'Neglected Duty' to declare war against the Egyptian regime. He finds the current rulers no different from the invading Mongols that Taymiyah was concerned about. Faraj (1986) writes:

> "The Rulers of this age are in apostasy from Islam. They were raised at the tables of imperialism, be it Crusaderism, or Communism, or Zionism. They carry nothing from Islam but their names, even though they pray and fast and claim to be Muslims….It is a well established rule of Islamic Law that the punishment of an apostate will be heavier than the punishment of an infidel…For instance, an apostate has to be killed in all circumstances….The Mongols and their likes-the equivalent of our rulers today….Whosoever doubts whether they should be fought is more ignorant of the religion of Islam." (p.169)

Osama bin-Laden and the Al Qaeda were influenced by the Egyptian groups and the latter's ideologues like Qutb and Faraj. Osama bin-Laden's August 23 1996 *fatwa* titled "Expel the Polytheists from the Arabian peninsula" includes *takfir* and apostasy of the domestic rulers as the first justification and allowing the occupation by infidels as the second justification for *jihad* against the Saudi regime. Bin-Laden (2005) gives the following justification:

> "1. Its suspension of the rulings of the Islamic law and replacement thereof with man-made laws, and its entering into a bloody confrontation with the righteous scholars and pious youth. May God sanctify whom He pleases.
> 2. Its inability to protect the land and its allowing the enemies of God to occupy it for years in the form of the American Crusaders, who have become the principal reason for all aspects of our land's disastrous predicament."(p.28)

Jihad against the infidels is based on the dichotomous division of the world, into two perennially warring abodes; the abode of Islam (*dar al Islam)* and the abode of the Infidels (*dar al Harb*), and people into believers and non-believers. This dichotomous division, as explained by Fadl (2006), is derived not from the Quran or the Sunnah, but from the work of classical Islamic jurists, who came up with this distinction to deal with the requirements of a medieval world where countries in Europe, the Middle East and Asia went to war routinely, signed peace treaties and plundered the weak. Some classical jurists even thought up other abodes like the abode of non-belligerence or neutrality (*dar al- sulh, or al-'ahd)* and *the* abode of justice (dar *al-'adl)*. But, these divisions, relevant to medieval times, have become the basis for declaring *jihad* against non-believers in the modern world.

The Jihadi view on the sword verse urging the killing of non-believers on the grounds of faith alone is in disregard of the *Salam* verses that preach toleration and peace. Islam regards killing of one human being as the killing of the entire humanity and, as with the Old Testament proclaims that saving the life of one as saving the life of all humanity. (Quran 5:32). The holy Quran says:

> "*Show forgiveness, speak for justice, and avoid the ignorant*" (Quran 7:199).

Fadl (2006) argues that the *jihadis* "entirely ignore the Quranic teaching that the act of destroying or spreading ruin on this earth is one of the gravest sins possible-*fasad fi al-ard,* which means to corrupt the earth by destroying the beauty of creation" (p.237). Even going by the *jihadi* logic it is expected that the non-believers have to be given the option of conversion or accepting *dhimma* status, before declaring an offensive *jihad*.

The primary focus of the Jihad against the infidel is the state of Israel, which is said to have been created as part of a conspiracy to perpetually occupy Palestine, specifically Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The defeats of the Arab world in the wars against Israel in 1948 was projected by Hasn al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim brotherhood, as a result of weakness of the Muslim *ummah* because of not following true Islam of Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. The defeat in the six days war in 1967 of the combined forces of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq at the hands of Israel marked a decisive shift in the polemics of the Jihadi movement. Firstly, the claim of the Arab nationalists that they were prepared to 'throw Israel and those behind Israel into the sea' (al-Zawahiri, 2006, p. 64) the third time there was a war (the first two wars were in 1948 and 1956) came to be ridiculed by the *jihadi* ideologues, who also argued that peace efforts with Israel would be futile. In Azzam's words: "Jihad and the rifle alone: no negotiations, no conferences, and no dialogues." (Quoted in Esposito, 2002, p.7)

The Government of Gamal Abdel Naser, had in the mid- 60s, arrested activists of the Muslim Brotherhood in their thousands and executed its top leaders like Qutb in order to suppress the Islamic activists. After the war Naser was discredited on the Arab streets and blamed for the defeat. The *jihadis* like al- Zawahiri (2006) claim 'the death of abd-al-Nasir..was also the death of his principles'(p.51). Anwar Sadat, after succeeding Naser, released many of the Islamic activists and tried to appease the Islamists. A new dimension was added when Sadat signed a peace treaty with the state of Israel with the mediation of the Americans (Camp David peace deal, 1979). There were several attempts by the activists to capture power and create an Islamic state in Egypt as part of which Sadat was assassinated on Oct 6, 1981. Since then the Egyptian state has left no stone unturned in suppressing the Jihadis and even the Egyptian Islamic Jihad has now made peace with the Egyptian regime. But, the anti-Zionist character continues to be fundamental in the justification of Jihad against the infidels.

The initial rhetoric against the West was that the West had created and supported Israel. The situation changed when the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan. Jihadis from all over the Arab world reached Pakistan and joined the Afghan war in the 'jihad to defend Muslim land'. For a while the West was not the principal focus. Once the Jihadis defeated a Super power with the largest ground force and American forces made a hasty retreat in Somalia in 1993, the *jihadis* claimed that God was on their side. The regional movements in Israel, Kashmir, Morocco, Sudan, Chechnya, Indonesia etc were now intensified. For the Jihadis the world was their stage, they had arrived and the war was now against the world order led by 'the United States and the global Jewish Government' (al-Zawahiri, 2006, p.125).

In 1998 bin-Laden and others issued a fatwa (bin-Laden, 2005) which is significant not merely because it provided a broad base for the Jihadi movement by the creation of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews, Crusaders and others, but also because it made a case for an all out, unrestricted offensive war, moving beyond the notion of *jihad* to defend Muslim land'. The fatwa begins with the sword verse and goes on to state the most aggressive intent.

> "To kill the American and their allies- civilians and military- is an individual duty incumbent upon every Muslim in all countries, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Holy Mosque from their grip, so that their armies leave all the territory of Islam, defeated, broken, and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of God Almighty." (Bin-Laden, 2006, p. 61)

The killing of civilians- non-combatants; women, even people of old age and children; almost any one, can now be part of *Jihad*. The argument, as al-Zawahiri (2006) makes clear is that civilians have willingly voted for their Governments and are accountable for the misdeeds of their Governments. Further, civilians pay taxes that fund the so called 'war against terror' and occupation of Muslim lands that has led to the death and repression of Muslim men, women and children. Al Qaeda's further justification, as best represented in the writings of al Zawahiri (2006), is 'the need to inflict the maximum casualties against the opponent, for this is the language understood by the west, no matter how much time and effort such operations take'. (p. 223) Beginning with the notion of *jihad* to defend Muslim land the rhetoric now is for an all-out, no-holds-barred offensive *jihad* 'to kill the American and their allies- civilians and military' and to take revenge for Muslim deaths, without any further conditionality or limitation. This killing is declared a religious duty.

The call for *Jihad,* including the so called martyrdom missions (generally called suicide missions) also involves the fulfilment of the personal desire to make one eligible for God's munificence. A death for an Islamic cause, *jihadis* argue, entitles a believer to privileges and rights. Since death is unavoidable, it is preferable that a believer dies fighting for Islam and receives the rewards of God rather than waiting for death to come on its own. In fact, the martyr does not die and is treated with care and respect in God's garden. Among the verses of the Quran quoted frequently by the *jihadis* are the following:

"Never think that those who were slain in the cause of God are dead. They are alive, and well provided for by their Lord; pleased with His gifts and rejoicing that those they left behind, who have not yet joined them, have nothing to fear or regret; rejoicing in God's grace and bounty. God will not deny the faithful their reward." (Quran 3:169-171)

The martyrs are treated with milk, honey and grapes and enjoy eternal youth with virgins (Quran 55:54 to 56, 56: 12 to39). The *jihadis* justify their activities in the name of defending Islam; at the same time it becomes an individual religious duty, which will entitle the *jihadi* to the benefits of God's generosity and the promised heaven. The critique of the *jihadi* articulation by the moderates is not the secular rationalist assertion that there is no evidence for life after death or that there is no heaven. The moderates argue that the activists have no competence to issue *fatwa* and that global *jihad* has no Islamic justification. Further, accepting someone in heaven is a decision that can be taken by God alone in the Hereafter and that there are several ways to attain the garden and *jihad* is not the only way. Fadl (2006) argues that the Quran uses the term *qital* to describe war, which can never be holy; it is either justified or unjustified. But, either way, war is not a desirable activity. The Quran teaches peace and moderation, tolerance and the avoidance of war. There are many verses in the Quran that preach peace and toleration rather than war and blood shed. The Quran says:

"If they incline to peace, make peace with them, and put your trust in God." (Quran 8:61)

In fact, moderate jurists like Fadl (2006) contend that Islamic law treats attacks on non-combatants in order to terrorize, including kidnapping, hostage-taking, mutilation, and torture as the crime of *hiraba* (waging war against society), which are specifically prohibited. 'In the modern age', Fadl writes, 'terrorism is the quintessential crime of corrupting the earth' (p.237).

Recent Developments

The *Jihadi* objective is still the establishment of a Muslim state in the heart of the Islamic world, and to progressively revive the fallen caliphate and the glory of the *Salaf*. However, the focus of the movement has shifted away from the 'near enemy' to the 'far' enemy. As al-Zawahiri(2006) writes ,
 "The Crusaders alliance led by the United States will not allow any Muslim force to reach power in the Arab countries…. Confining the battle to the domestic enemy, (within the Arab states), will not be feasible in this stage of the battle" (p.201).

Jihad is now projected as a universal battle against the United States and its allies, Israel, Russia, India and international organisations like the United Nations, the Western Multi-national Corporations, the international communications and data exchange systems, the international news agencies and satellite channels and even international relief agencies (al zawahiri, 2006, p.201). Moreover, contemporary *Jihad* makes no distinction between combatants and non-combatants despite the view of a majority of Muslim scholars that Islam cannot be interpreted to justify such an unlimited and universal terrorist movement, particularly indiscriminate killing of civilians.

The focus on the far enemy is a result of the US led 'global war on terror' as much as a realisation that global *jihad* now faces domestic opposition. The Council of Senior Ulamna of Saudi Arabia, headed by the former Chief Mufti bin-Baz, was targeted for condemnation by Osama bin Laden in a statement issued on December 29 1994, in which bin-Laden accuses bin-Baz of allowing state repression and further that 'this has not only happened in your knowledge and with your silence, but as a result of your judicial decrees' (bin-Laden, 2005, p.5). Bin-Laden and al-Qaeda continue to   fight the Saudi regime and the Saudi Wahabi religious elite.

In Egypt imprisoned leaders of al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya or in short Jamaa Islamiya (Egyptian Islamic Group), which began a violent campaign in the 1970s based on the concept of *takfir* and whose leader Abu-Yasir Rifai Ahmad Taha was one of the signatories to the 1998 fatwa forming the world Islamic front (bin-Laden, 2005, p.69), denounced violence in 1997 and announced a unilateral cessation to violent operations on religious grounds (Sageman, 2004; al-Zawahiri, 2006). The Jamma had carried out large scale violent attacks in the 1990s resulting in the imprisonment of more than 20,000 activists. The Egyptian Government refused to enter into any dialogue with the Jamma, which was crippled by the imprisonment of its top leaders and migration of many out of Egypt. But, over a period of time the peace initiative has produced an active theological dialogue, particularly with the Azhari seminary. In 2001/2002 the Jamaa published a series of four books entitled 'Correction of Understanding', which lays down the foundation of what is called a 'new theology' that supports a non-violent approach to Islamic movements (El-Awa, 2006). As might be expected, former Egyptian *Jihadi* leaders like al Zawahari (2006) have criticised the peace initiative.

After 2001, Pakistan, a country ruled for a long time by a military-mullah alliance and supporting *jihad* in Afghanistan and Kashmir, joined the US-led war on terror. The *jihadis*, in retaliation, have carried out three unsuccessful attempts to kill General Musharaf and have started a violent campaign against the security forces, particularly in the North-western tribal areas, now under the control of the Pakistani Taliban. The moderate parties have come together to partially restore democracy and to fight terrorism; in the process Benazir Bhutto was killed. The religious political parties were routed in the 2008 Pakistan General elections.

On Feb 25 2008 the Darul Uloom Deoband, the largest Islamic seminary in the world, held an anti-terrorism conference, which was attended by 6000 Deobandi *Imams*. At the end of the conference the Deobandis issued a fatwa stating that terrorism is not Islamic:

> "Islam is the religion of mercy for all humanity. It is the fountainhead of eternal peace, tranquillity, security. Islam has given so much importance to human beings that it regards the killing of a single person the killing of the entire humanity, without differentiation based on creed and caste. Its teaching of peace encompasses all humanity. Islam has taught its followers to treat all mankind with equality, mercy, tolerance, justice. Islam sternly condemns all kinds of oppression, violence and terrorism. It has regarded oppression, mischief, rioting and murdering among severest sins and crimes." (p.1)

Conservative Islam was never the favoured religion of the masses, who were condemned as '*jahils*' (ignorant people) by the elite. Consider the following examples. Fundamentalists prohibit all forms of singing and dancing. Watching TV is considered un-Islamic except when Islam is being preached. Reading a story book or watching a play or a movie is un-Islamic since they are lies. Offering a flower to a lady is un-Islamic. Standing up in honour of someone is un-Islamic since no one except God should be honoured. Muslims are forbidden from clapping since no one except God should be praised. Celebrating a birthday, including that of Prophet Muhammad is prohibited. Masses of Muslims do not conform to the puritanical standards of the extremists and go about life with ease. Many subscribe to highly tolerant versions of *Sufi* Islam.

The politico-religious elite represented by the ullama, the academia, the political dispensation and the armies, be it in Saudi Arabaia, Egypt or Pakistan, all have now distanced themselves from the *jihadi* articulation of Islam. The Wahabis, the Azharis and the Deobandis, though essentially conservatives, denounce the *jihadi* interpretations and espousal of violence. There are many possible ways of interpreting Islam. The global *jihadi* version is one particular interpretation that originated in a particular theological, geo-political and historical context. But, the issue is why some individuals find the *jihadi* version attractive even when they have many other alternative ways of making sense of Islamic faith and identity.

Concluding Considerations

As with all fundamentalist interpretations of faith, or faith-like ideologies, there are profound paradoxes and internal-contradictions in the global *Jihadi* perspective. It claims to be based on a direct reading of the sacred texts, unhindered by intellectualisation, but requires that it is the interpretation and *fatwas* issued by *Jihadi* leaders that are to be taken as offering the true meaning of the Quran. The arguments are defended by reference to the 'sword verses' in the Quran, but disregard the 'peace verses'. Many aspects of Western scholarship and science are decried, but those that can be directly used for military benefit are accepted. The interpretations of the Quran that assigns women and non-believers to inferior status are accepted but the principles of Quranic jurisprudence that recognise human rights and equality are ignored. Religious objectives are interpreted as geo-political goals.

Perhaps of most significance in our secular, non-intellectual age is that the arguments for violence and destruction are played out in the rhetoric of religious

discussions that are rooted in the interpretation of early mediaeval texts. The parallels to the debates of the Spanish Inquisition, or the Talmudic discussions that laid the groundwork for Judaism in the middle-ages, are everywhere to be seen, with the exception that those, essentially European debates were founded in a confident acceptance that they were the world-order, rather than the search to return to an earlier world-order hundreds of years later, which seems to be the essence of present-day *Jihadism.*

The general upsurge in fundamentalism across many religions over the last quarter of a century, in parallel with the demise of the great atheistic ideologies like communism, has been widely documented. It is reflected, to take two well-known examples, in the spread of creationism across Christian groups and the growth in ultra-orthodox communities in Israel. But what marks the *jihadi* movement out from all of these is its embrace of violence with the aim of comprehensively changing the character of the state and the world order into a basically theocratic global system. Other religious movements are possibly concerned with transforming individuals or even working as an effective pressure group within the system to advance a set of policy objectives using peaceful or democratic methods. The identification of the weakness of Arab nations in the face of Western military prowess as being due to a lack of following of proper Islamic principles seems to be a crucial aspect of the central militancy of the *jihadi* belief system. It is interesting to note that those Muslim states that are gaining in self-confidence are the ones leading the challenge to the rhetoric of the sword verses.

Religion has different degrees of impact on day-to-day life in modern society. Muslim societies are possibly influenced by region far more than the modern Western societies. But, to be religious or even Islamic is one thing; advocating *jihad* is entirely another. We have argued that it is possible for a Muslim to pursue alternative ways of understanding Islam while keeping a safe distance from global *jihad*. The question therefore arises as to why the followers of violent *jihad* apparently accept the arguments and *fatwas* of the activists when many alternatives are open to them? Is the answer to be found in some other more personal processes (for example influence of tribal customs of taking revenge) that are mediating the interpretations and the acceptance? And are these psychological processes what we should be considering? We need to have a clear grasp of the personal as well as rhetorical issues in thinking about any process of disengagement.

References

Adams, C.J. (1983) Mawdudi and the Islamic State. In J.L. Esposito (Ed.) *Voices of Resurgent Islam,* New York: Oxford University Press.

Al-zawahiri, A. (2006) *His own Words.* Translated by Laura Mansfield, USA: TLG Publications.

Azam, A. (2008) *Defence of the Muslim Land: The First Obligation After Iman.* http://www.religioscope.com/info/doc/jihad/azzam_defence_1_table.htm (downloaded on 21 April, 2008)

Bin-Laden, O. (2005) *Messages to the World: the Statements of Osama Bin-Laden*, edited and introduced by Bruce Lawrence. London: Verso.

Coulson, N.J. (1994), *A History of Islamic Law.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Esposito, J.L. (2002) *Unholy War: Terror in the name of Islam.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fadl, K. A. (2006) *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*. New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India.

Faraj, A. A. 1986) *The Neglected Duty*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company

Gramsci, A. (1995) *Further selections from the prison notebooks.* London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Gunaratna, R. (2002) *Inside Al Qaeda: global network of terror.* U.K.: C.Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd.

Huntington, S. P. (1998) *The Clash of Civilizations and the remaking of the world order.* London: Touchstone Books.

Iqbal , J. (1983) Democracy and the Modern Islamic State. In J.L. Esposito (Ed.) *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Karawan, I. A. (1995) Takfir. In John L. Esposito (Ed.) *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. *vol. 4, pp. 178-179*

Kepel, G. (2006) *The Trail of Political Islam.* London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.

Mawdudi, S. A. (1998) *Jihad in Islam.* Pakistan: Islamic Publication, (Pvt.) Limited.

Metcalf, B. D. (1995) Deobandis. In J.L. Esposito (Ed.) *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. *vol.1, pp. 362-363*

Nettler, R.L. (1995) Ibn Taymiyah, Taqi al-din Ahmed. In J.L. Esposito (Ed.) *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.*vol.2 , pp . 165-166*

Newby G. D. (2006) *Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Oxford, Oxford University Press

Qutb, S. (2007). *Milestones.* New Delhi: Islamic Book Service.

Rashid. A. (2002) *Taliban: Islam, oil and the new great game in Central Asia.* London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.

Salwa, E. (2006) *The Militant Islamic Group in Egypt (1974-2004).* Cairo: Maktabat al-Shuruq al-Duwaliyya.

Schact, J. (1991) *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sageman, M. (2004) *Understanding Terror Networks.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Ziadeh, F. J. (1995) Sunni School of Law , In J.L. Esposito (Ed.) *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1995 *vol.2 , pp . 456-462*

Statements

Declaration: All India Anti-Terrorism Conference, Darul Uloom Deioband, 25 Feb 2008
http://www.indianmuslims.info/documents/declaration_all_india_anti_terrorism_conference.html
(downloaded on 30 April, 2008)