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RELIGIOUS BASIS FOR ISLAMIC TERRORISM: THE QURAN AND ITS INTERPRETATIONS

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Abstract:

Extreme religious interpretations of the Quran and the movement of Islamic Revivalism influence the emergence and progression of violent Jihad in contemporary times. Islamic 'terrorists' are able to legitimize their movement as an act of violent Jihad permitted by the Quran essentially because of religious sanctions that permit the use of violence as an act of defense and to preserve the will of God in Islamic communities. The Quran systematizes this use and relates it to other aspects of the Shariat through its discourse on revivalism. Based on the Quranic principle of *ijtihad*, terrorists emphasize the Quran's tenets on violence and revivalism in their religious interpretations and present it as a legitimate premise for the use of excessive aggression. According to *ijtihad* Muslims can interpret and determine the extent of their Islamic practices individually as long as these are directed towards ensuring the will of God in an Islamic community. Thus terrorists use *ijtihad* to emphasize Quranic clauses that sanction the use of violent Jihad as a method ordained by God to preserve the Shariat in an Islamic community. The manner in which terrorists use *ijtihad* to contextualize geopolitical factors as a cause for violent Jihad is determined by their extreme interpretations of the Quran. These interpretations also determine the extent of violence used in a Jihad for religious amelioration. The religious legitimacy of this violence prevails until the cause and course of violent Jihad correlates with the Quran's discourse on violence and revivalism.

In contemporary times an extreme interpretation of the movement of Revivalism¹ that is inspired by 'revivalism' also provides an organized premise for Islamic terrorism. When

¹ Refers to the contemporary movement of Islamic Revivalism

implemented, this causes variations within specific geopolitical conditions and in different Jihadi groups. However a common understanding of religious doctrines determines the extent of Revivalism in Islamic communities because this movement relies heavily on the Quranic discourse for its existence. Thus, the religious basis for Islamic terrorism is primarily found when extreme interpretations of the Quran's tenets on violence and revivalism are directed towards obtaining an equally radical version of Revivalism in specific geopolitical conditions. In this manner, extreme Quranic and Revivalist interpretations ensure the ideological persistence of Islamic terrorism as a religious effort to preserve the will of God in an Islamic community.

The aim is to show the manner in which religion can cause the emergence of Islamic violence as we know it today. The discourse on Islamic violence and counter-terrorism needs to be urgently studied given the numerous instances of violent Jihad in contemporary times. Many writings on Islamic violence and statements released after an act of Islamic violence allude to the impact of religion on violent Jihad, but they rarely explore it or present a premise for its existence. This exploration will be conducted based on research of mine on the Kashmir crisis and the Insurgency in it. Thus, examples from Insurgency in Kashmir will be used on occasion to illustratively develop this argument.

In his book The Clash of Civilizations, Samuel Huntington states that a theory must be causal and simple. Using the words of Thomas Kuhn, he explains that “to be accepted as a paradigm [it] must seem better than its competitors but it need not, and in fact never does, explain all the facts with which it can be confronted²”. Furthering such simplicity and exploration, will be the central effort of this discourse. The sources for this exploration will be mainly derived from theoretical and practical understandings of terrorism, Islamic religion and theology and the movement of Islamic Revivalism. A comparison between Islam and other religions will not be presented when evaluating the impact of Islam on violent Jihad. It will essentially present religious premises for violent Jihad from a Muslim rather than non-Muslim or ‘Western’ perspective; although it is accepted that parallels in the understanding of ‘violence’ do exist in the Muslim and non-Muslim world. Non-Muslim perspectives on violence and terrorism are relevant and known to

² Huntington Samuel, “*Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*”, Penguin Books India, New Delhi 1996, p. 30.

the author. However a perpetual emphasis on these factors or a failure to acknowledge them limits the scope of the study of Islamic terrorism itself. The aim will be to present an Islamic perspective on violent Jihad. Then, it is accepted that a complex interplay between religious understandings and geopolitical events influence the emergence of Islamic violence in contemporary times.

Thereafter, it must be stated that extreme psychological and sociological factors intrinsic to the Jihadis influence the religious choices that cause violent Jihad. An analysis of these factors is outside the realm of this discourse which remains political in its scope. Further, on occasion a lack of empirical data and non-circumstantial evidence is encountered to substantiate some contentions mentioned ahead. As it has been suggested previously³ this is mainly because there is a dearth of such data and reliable evidence pertaining to religious terrorism. At certain points, it becomes difficult to validate external opinions mainly because of the right to individual interpretations vested by the Quran in all Muslims. The validity of these opinions is vested in the fact that they are taken from informed Muslims who practice moderate and radical interpretations of Islam. Any reader may be expected to believe that any kind of terrorism is unjustifiable. However, in order to address these movements effectively, they must be studied from all possible dimensions and especially from the cultural contexts from which they arise.

Definitions:

A few terms that are important to the study of violence in Islam are: terrorism, religious terrorism and Islamic terrorism. A discussion of these terms will permit a comprehensive analysis on the way in which the use of violence sanctioned by the Quran and its interpretations amounts to Islamic terrorism.

I. Terrorism:

³ Biggo, Nancy C. The Rationality of the use of Terrorism by Secular and Religious Groups, www.dissertations.com: 2002.

Terrorism is a non-political act of aggression in which the extent of violence used is “outside the realm of normative behavior⁴”. Terrorists use or threaten to use this violence against combatants and non-combatants to achieve political, social, economical or religious change within a given community. These reforms appeal to the terrorists and do not represent popular opinion of the society from which terrorism arises and “terrorists are no respecters of borders⁵”. Thus Omar Abdullah, the President of the National Conference Party in Kashmir says that “there are no well defined or internationally accepted criteria to designate ...an organization as ‘terrorist’”. However the [UN] Security Council has, on occasion, adopted resolutions putting in place specific sanctions and measures against individual countries or...certain terrorist organizations⁶”. According to Kofi Annan the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) the manifestations of terrorism are limitless. The “only common denominator among different variants of terrorism is the calculated use of deadly violence against civilians⁷”. Terrorists are those who violate the “right to life, liberty and security⁸” vested in each civilian by the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Resolution: 217 A (III). Thus the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) of the United Kingdom defines terrorism as a movement in which terrorists “directly challenge the authority of democratically elected governments to manage their country’s affairs peacefully, according to the rule of law and internationally accepted fundamentals of human rights⁹”, to satisfy their own liking. A few examples of terrorists groups are the: Aum Shinrikyo (Japan), Basque Fatherland and Liberty (Spain), Kach and Kahane Chai (Israel), Sendero Luminoso (Peru), True IRA (Ireland), Ellalan Force (Sri Lanka), Armed Islamic Group (Algeria), Al-Jihad (Egypt) and Dal Khalsa (India)¹⁰.

II. Religious Terrorism:

⁴ Biggo, Nancy C. The Rationality of the use of Terrorism by Secular and Religious Groups, www.dissertations.com, p. 18.

⁵ Speech given by Tony Blair to UN General Assembly on September 21, 1998 Britain and the Fight against International Terrorism, An FCO Network Feature, www.fco.org, p. 2.

⁶ Criteria to Declare a country and organization as terrorist, Unstarred Question, No 1982, Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs.

⁷ Security Council Foreign Ministers Discuss Counter-terrorism, US Department of State, International Information Programs, <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/01111206.htm>.

⁸ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, www.un.org, p. 1.

⁹ Britain and the Fight against International Terrorism, p.1.

¹⁰ Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2003. United States Department of State, www.state.gov, June 2004.

Religious terrorism occurs when the use of terrorism is systematized by an ideological and fanatical interpretation of a religious text. Religious terrorist groups functioning in the absence of this pretext, create “junk terrorism¹¹”. A few examples of religious terrorist groups are the: Aum Shinrikyo, Kach and Kahane Chai, Al-Jihad and Dal Khalsa¹². According to Charles Kimball, religious terrorism functions on the basis of five essential principles. These are: means justify the end, holy war, blind obedience, absolute truth claims and the ideal times. Kimball explains that ‘truth claims’ are essential points in a religion “at which divergent interpretations arise¹³”. Extreme interpretations of ‘truth claims’ provoke the ideology upon which religious terrorism is based. However the “authentic religious truth claims are never as inflexible and exclusive as zealous adherents insist¹⁴”. The staunch ‘truth claims’ professed by religious terrorists, allow them to use “religious structures and doctrines...almost like weapons¹⁵” for their movement. In the process, “religious convictions that become locked into absolute truths can easily lead people to see themselves as God’s agents. People so emboldened are capable of violent and destructive behavior in the name of religion¹⁶”. This conviction creates fanatical interpretations and ideologies that give rise to religious terrorism. Nancy Connors Biggo’s¹⁷, states that foreign observers are unfamiliar with the extreme interpretations of religious terrorists. Thus scholars often dismiss the rhetoric of religious terrorism as one that is devoid of any strategic motivation. This creates a dearth of quantifiable data that can be used to assess religious terrorism. However Biggo explains that the lack of understanding or data cannot dismiss the fact that religious terrorism is systematized by extreme interpretations of a religious text. Therefore Wener Ruf, states, “where God was pronounced dead all notions of morality have been turned into nihilism¹⁸”.

III. Islamic Terrorism:

¹¹Schwartz Stephen, “*The Two Faces of Islam – The House of Sa’ud from Tradition to Terror*”, Doubleday – Random House, New York 2002, p. 250.

¹²Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2003.

¹³Kimball Charles, “*When Religion Becomes Evil*”, Harper San Francisco, New York 2003, p. 46

¹⁴ Kimball Charles, “*When Religion Becomes Evil*”, p. 41.

¹⁵ Kimball Charles, “*When Religion Becomes Evil*”, p. 32.

¹⁶ Kimball Charles, “*When Religion Becomes Evil*”, p. 70.

¹⁷ The author of the article “*The Rationality of the use of Terrorism by Secular and Religious Groups*”

¹⁸ Ruf Wener, “*Islam and the West- Judgments, Prejudices, Political Perspectives*”, Verlag GmbH&Co.Kg, Munster:2002, p. 21.

Islamic terrorism is a movement in which the violence caused by terrorism is derived from and used to preserve extreme interpretations of the Quran, in an Islamic community. An in-depth discussion of the how Islamic terrorism is invoked from the Quran, will follow. However, preliminarily speaking Islamic terrorism exists where there is “a controversy over sacred space¹⁹” or a Quranic tenet has been violated. Participants of this movement call for “unquestioned devotion ... [and] blind obedience²⁰” to the word of God in order to ameliorate un-Islamic conditions. A few Islamic terrorist groups are: Al-Jihad, Al-Quida (Afghanistan), Hamas (Palestine), Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (Kashmir) and the Lashkar e-Toiba (Kashmir).

What does the Quran say about the use of violence and terrorism? ²¹

The Quran permits violence as an act of defence waged to protect the Shariat in an Islamic community. The Shariat can be explained as a system of ordinances outlined in the Quran and Hadis²² through which “God lays down for mankind the rules of conduct²³”. The Shariat is the “guidance for all walks of life – individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, national and international²⁴”. Muslims are advised to closely follow the Shariat to acquire the well being that God has envisioned for the Islamic community. Preservation of the Shariat is an “obligation of every able-bodied individual²⁵”. “Oppression, despotism, injustice and criminal abuse of power²⁶” of the Shariat by Muslims or non-Muslims²⁷, must be punished. The Quran identifies three main kinds of Jihad that can be used for this purpose. These are: internal²⁸, external²⁹ and inter-communal³⁰. The Quran permits the use of violence as an optional method for all three forms of Jihad but it limits the use of violence in

¹⁹ Kimball Charles, “*When Religion Becomes Evil*, p. 127.

²⁰ Kimball Charles, “*When Religion Becomes Evil*, p. 72.

²¹ Views presented in this section that are not sourced represent the authors own understanding of the Quran, Islamic Revivalism, Islamic theology and Islamic culture.

²² The Hadis (or Hadith) is the collection of biographic reports about the sayings, customs and doings of Mohammed and his companions; they also reflect on what Mohammed enjoined and tolerated in his presence or forbade. (<http://answering-islam.org/Nehls/Ask/sunnah.html>)

²³ Translated by N.J. Dawood, “*The Koran*”, Penguin Group, England 1999, p. 357 (47:3).

²⁴ Ahmad Khurshid, “*Islam ~ its meaning and message*”, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester: 1975, p. 37.

²⁵ Lewis Bernard, “*The Crisis of Islam- Holy War and Unholy Terror*”, p. 31.

²⁶ Sadar Ziauddin, “*Islam, Postmodernism and other Futures*”, Pluto Press, Virginia 2003, p. 64.

²⁷ The refers to people who do not follow Islam and to those societies, states or communities in which the dominant population is not Muslim.

²⁸ Internal Jihad is that which is declared by a Muslim on himself to improve his adherence to the Quranic revelations.

²⁹ External Jihad declared by an individual against the Islamic community to attain Quranic justice

³⁰ Inter-communal Jihad that declared between communities to attain Quranic objectives

'internal'³¹ and 'external' Jihad. It expands on its doctrine of Jihad and violence, mainly in the context of 'inter-communal' conflicts. In these cases, Muslims can individually determine the nature and extent of Jihad based on the 'freedom of interpretations' vested by the Quran in its followers, and the geopolitical conditions in which the conflict arises. However the most essential prerequisite in the Quran's discourse on violence is that, force should be used only when the Shariat has been violated and needs to be persevered as the "very work of God Himself"³².

Thus, Mir Zohar Hussain explains that violent Jihad should be undertaken "in God's name and with pure and noble intentions, never for self-aggrandizement. Martial Jihad³³ should be used to protect and to promote the integrity of Islam and to defend the *umma* [community] against hostile unbelievers whether they are invading armies or un-Islamic internal despots³⁴". The use of forces in all other instances is "forbidden by God"³⁵. Once cause for violent Jihad has been established on the basis of geopolitical circumstances and religious understandings of the same, the Quran advises Muslims to "Fight for the sake of God those that fight against you but do not attack them first. God does not love aggressors. Slay them wherever you find them"³⁶. It encourages violent Jihadis to muster "all the men and cavalry at your disposal... [and]...strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies³⁷...until...God's religion³⁸ reigns supreme³⁹". Jihadis should use violence to "ward off external aggression... maintain internal order... and establish absolute justice for all citizens"⁴⁰. Jihadis should "employ[ed] all means and media...for the establishment of 'all that is right' and the elimination of 'all that is wrong'⁴¹". If they do so then they will "dwell amidst garden and fountains and shall receive what their Lord will give them...for they have done good works"⁴².

With reference to violence in external Jihad, the Quran states that "if two parties among Believers fall into a quarrel, make ye peace between them: but if one of them transgresses

³¹ Violence is more rarely advocated in the case of internal as compared to external Jihad.

³² Taher Mohamed, "Encyclopedic Survey of Islamic Culture- Vol. 11", Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi 1997, p. 25.

³³ Refers to a method of Jihad which can be used for internal, external or inter-communal purposes

³⁴ Husain Mir Zohar, "Global Islamic Politics", Harper Collins College Publishers, New York 1995, p. 37-38.

³⁵ "The Koran", p. 107 (6:151).

³⁶ "The Koran", p. 29, (2.912 and 2.913).

³⁷ Mohammad Nazar, "Commandments by God in the Quran", The Message Publications, New York 1991, p. 733 (8:25).

³⁸ According to the Quran, Islam is God's true and only religion.

³⁹ "The Koran", p. 29, (2.912 and 2.913).

⁴⁰ Choudhry Goulam W, "Pakistan – Transition from Civilian to Military Rule", Scorpion Publishing, Essex 1998, p. 92.

⁴¹ Choudhry Goulam W, "Pakistan – Transition from Civilian to Military Rule", p. 93.

⁴² "The Koran", p. 367 (51:17).

beyond bounds against the other, then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until he complies with the command of Allah⁴³". However, it also states, "It is unlawful for a believer to kill another believer, accidents excepted⁴⁴", and that "You shall not shed your kinsmen's blood or turn them out of their dwellings⁴⁵". Imprecise and rare references to 'external Jihad' minimize the scope for intra-communal violence in Islam. However, the Quran's permission of violence in such cases does present violent Jihad as an option for remedying intra-societal problems that might hinder the Shariat and the overall well being of Islamic societies.

When discussing violence in inter-communal conflicts, the Quran states that "Unbelievers are those who declare: God is the Messiah, the son of Mary⁴⁶...Those that make war against God and His Apostles and spread disorder in the land shall be slain or crucified, or be banished from the land⁴⁷". It is God's will that unbelievers "be held up to shame in this world and sternly punished in the hereafter: except those that repent before you.... Reduce them⁴⁸...according to God's revelations and do not be led by their desires. If they reject your judgment, know that it is God's wish to scourge them for their sin⁴⁹... tell the unbelievers that if they mend their ways their past shall be forgiven; but if they persist in sin, let them reflect upon the fate of bygone nations...⁵⁰...Like Pharaoh's people and those before them, they will disbelieve their Lord's revelations. Therefore We will destroy them for their sins even as We drowned Pharaoh's people. They were wicked men all....We aided believers against their enemies and they triumphed over them⁵¹... [We] shall destroy the wrongdoers and give you their land to dwell in⁵²... [do] not leave behind a single unbeliever on the earth. If you spare them they will mislead Your servants and beget none but sinners and unbelievers⁵³...Let not the unbelievers think that they will ever get away. They have not the power so to do...strike terror into the enemy of God and your enemy, and others besides them. Prophet, rouse the faithful to arms...they shall rout a thousand

⁴³ "The Koran", p. 407 (71:9).

⁴⁴ "The Koran", p. 70, (4:92).

⁴⁵ "The Koran", p.17, (2:84).

⁴⁶ "The Koran", p. 81, (5:16).

⁴⁷ "The Koran", p. 83, (5:34).

⁴⁸ "The Koran", p. 83, (5:34).

⁴⁹ "The Koran", p. 85, (5:49).

⁵⁰ "The Koran", p. 295, (33:28).

⁵¹ "The Koran", p. 392, (61:14).

⁵² "The Koran", p. 180, (14:11).

⁵³ "The Koran", p. 407, (71:28).

unbelievers, for they are devoid of understanding. If they incline to peace, make peace with them and put your trust in God⁵⁴”.

As stated above, this discourse on violence in intra and inter communal conflict can be used when any law of the Shariat has been persistently violated in a given region. The democratic misgivings that have confronted the Kashmiris since the onset of the territorial dispute between them, the Indians and the Pakistanis can be used to elaborate on this fact. Since 1947, India, Pakistan and the Kashmiris have claimed territorial rights over the area of Kashmir. The bilateral evolution of the crisis between India and Pakistan has marginalized the political demands of the Kashmiris, most of whom are Muslim. In 1989, a section of the Kashmiris used violent Jihad to oppose this marginalization and create an independent Kashmir, on political and religious grounds. The manner in which the Quran legitimizes this movement will now be discussed.

According to the Shariat on governance, “people are to be free and in possession of democratic rights. People in the Islamic state are to be free from subjugation to any human being, because their government is the government of the law [i.e. Quranic Law] and they are subjects of God alone. The objectives of the Islamic state are to maintain internal order and ward off external aggression and to establish absolute justice for all citizens...The Head of an Islamic State must be a Muslim... The functions of the Head of the State are to: live for God, imitate the Holy Prophet as a Muslim and as head of state as best as he can, be a servant of the people and not their master...The Head of the State is not above the law...his function being...to administer the state... on the basis of truth and justice as given in the divine law...as long as he governs in conformity with the guidance, given by God...he should be implicitly obeyed⁵⁵”.

The evolution of the Kashmir crisis since 1947 has caused both India and Pakistan to violate the Shariat on governance by suppressing the political wishes and rights of the Kashmiris in terms of their demand for ‘independent Kashmir’. This has also undermined participatory governance in Kashmir on the basis of pluralist Islam within the semi-autonomous status given to

⁵⁴ Quotation from “Let...God” is an compilation of extracts from The Spoils, Chapter 8 of the Quran and Repentance, Chapter 9 of the Quran, “*The Koran*”, p 126-146.

⁵⁵ Choudhry Goulam W, “*Pakistan – Transition from Civilian to Military Rule*”, p. 92-97.

Kashmir by India. Some examples of this can be seen in the lack of political representation given to the Kashmiri legislature in diplomatic negotiations between India and Pakistan; the Delhi Agreement; the 7th amendment to the Indian constitution; imprisonment of Sheik Abdullah in the 1950s; the 1947 and 1965 war between India and Pakistan; the Indira-Sheik Accord and the Rajiv-Farooq accord; and the rigging of state elections in 1987.⁵⁶ Paula R. Newberg explains that, these events never allowed “secularism and decentralization⁵⁷” to become tangible principles of Kashmiri society. The political and military tensions caused by these circumstances have destabilized social freedoms in Kashmir for over fifty-years. In the 1960s and 1970s, Muslims in Kashmir who had followed Sufi Islam since the 1300s, saw an influx of traditional Islamic teachings that came mainly from Pakistan.⁵⁸ Some Muslims began to rely on these traditional understandings of Islam to justify the years of political and social suppression that had confronted Kashmir.

A radical extension of this effect was the onset of the Insurgency in 1989. This resulted from a decision by some Kashmiris to interpret geopolitical events from religious perspectives and use the Quran’s discourse on violence to ameliorate the violated Shariat on governance in Kashmir. After suffering this plight for over forty years, in 1987, some Kashmiri Muslims “took to guns [because] they were denied basic rights and freedom⁵⁹”. According to Goulam Choudhry “people in the Islamic state are to be free from subjugation to any human being, because their government is the government of the law and they are subjects of God alone⁶⁰”. In this context, the Quran states, “permission to take up arms is hereby given to those who are attacked, because they have been wronged⁶¹”. Thus, Yasin Malik⁶² explains, “political righteousness or independence had no scope in Kashmir. This is because the Indian government had no respect for the age-old requests of the people of Kashmir and it gave no political space to the people of

⁵⁶ For details on this see: Venkatraman, Amritha. “*Kashmir: Islam and Terror*”, Rutgers University, New Jersey: 2005. Chapter 1.

⁵⁷ Newberg Paula R. “*Double Betrayal – Repression and Insurgency in Kashmir*”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C.: 1995, p. 15.

⁵⁸ See: Ganguly, Sumit. “*The Crisis in Kashmir – Proponents of War, hope and peace*”, Woodrow Wilson Center and Cambridge University Press, Washington D.C.: 1997.

⁵⁹ Ghulam Muhammad Bhatt, Tribune Chandigarh, July 10, 2000 <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2000/20000710/j&k.htm#3>, Date accessed: October 3, 2004

⁶⁰ Pakistan – Transition from Civilian to Military Rule, Pg 94

⁶¹ The Koran, Penguin Classics, Pg 146, [9:121]

⁶² Leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) that was dominant during Phase I of the Insurgency.

Kashmir to express their movement non-violently. The people of Kashmir want respect and want to be heard and the sustained inability to obtain these goals caused violence and militancy in Kashmir⁶³. Nadeem Khatib⁶⁴ explains that this violence was the call of Allah and by participating in it, he was “doing what Allah has made our *farz* [duty]... duty to Allah comes first... my *Iman* [faith] is so strong...It is important to remember that life on this earth is nothing more than a test and solving ground, and that life to come is the eternal life⁶⁵”. The nature of this violent Jihad declared by Malik, Khatib and others was both external and inter-communal as it was directed towards India and Pakistan. This was the case till 1994, when the Insurgency was carried forth mainly by pan-Islamic Jihadis⁶⁶ seeking to further a pro-Pakistan agenda in Kashmir.⁶⁷

Thus, through its affirmative discourse on the use of violence and its association with the Divine and martyrdom, the Quran encourages the popularity of violent Jihad as a legitimate tool for Muslims to overpower their adversaries. Through this association the Quran also projects the use of violence as a religious duty that demonstrates the utmost submission to God and deserves the highest rewards, in intra and inter communal conflicts. This becomes more compelling because the Quran permits violence, in any instance where the Shariat has been violated. A Muslim who foresees this violation as important is allowed by the Quran within the three-fold relationship to adopt violent Jihad. As explained by Alam Khundmiri⁶⁸ the three fold relationship comprises of the following associations: i-i, i-it and i-they. The ‘i-i’ association refers to the Muslims relationship with himself as a subject of God. The ‘i-it’ relationship refers to the interactions that a Muslim chooses to have with the Quran so that he can enhance his association with God. The ‘i-they’ relationship refers to the manner in which a Muslim interacts with his community. This should reflect his understandings of God and the Quran. Following these relationships in their entirety will enable a Muslim to carry out the will of God in accordance with the Quran in both private and public lives. The manner in which this process applies to each

⁶³Yasin Malik, the leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF); Interview given to Amritha Venkatraman in May 2004

⁶⁴ Participant of the Kashmir based insurgent group called Al-Badr.

⁶⁵ Kashmir – Roots of Conflict and Paths to Peace, Pg 105

⁶⁶ See: Infiltration of Al-Quida Terrorists, Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 258, to be answered on July 16, 2002

⁶⁷ Even after 1994, the above mentioned reason of religious violence has been used for Jihad in Kashmir. Geopolitical events have been religiously interpreted to support the pro-Pakistan agenda. For details see: Venkatraman Amritha, “*Kashmir: Islam and Terror*”, Chapter 3.

⁶⁸ Khundmiri, Alam. “*Secularism, Islam and Modernity*”, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi 2001.

Muslim depends on individual interpretations of the Quran which extend themselves to the social realm as well. If adopted on the basis of individual will and sense of religious duty, then violent Jihad can be considered as an act of great patriotism in Islam which is waged to simultaneously protect all three of the relationships.

An act of violence that is not directed towards preserving the Shariat and the will of God is categorized as 'terrorism' in Islam. Such acts are a deviation from the path of God and the Quran states that "those that deny God's revelations shall be sternly punished; God is mighty and capable of revenge. Nothing on earth or in heaven is hidden from God⁶⁹". The Quran is extremely categorical in outlining the premise and course for Islamic violence so that it can deter non-religious violence from occurring. The Quran also emphasizes that non-religious violence will occur only occasionally if Muslims follow the Shariat closely. Muslims can apply their Quranic understandings to geopolitical conditions and present religious premise for violent Jihad. Once this is done, the intent and act of violence meets Quranic requirements consequently making violent Jihad a legitimate religious reaction. Most often, acts categorized as 'terrorism' in the non-Muslim world represent religious rather than non-religious violence executed within the Quran's discourse on violence.

This is because the non-Muslim world's categorization of violence is not related to the Quran. In the non-Muslim world, the use of legitimate violence is defined as a state-oriented concept which must find just cause in domestic or international precepts.⁷⁰ However, in the Islamic world the Quran itself determines political, economic and social perceptions. Thus, the cause for violence emerging from these themes is related to the Shariat and must be dispensed in accordance with it. Violence in Islamic nations almost always has an essential religious rather than a purely political bias. The Quran states that any Muslim can be a 'warrior of God' rather than the 'state' based on his religious interpretations. The extent to which violence can be used in Islam for this purpose remains unstipulated by the Quran. It simply states that Jihadis should engage all means required to ensure that the enemy is defeated or accepts defeat. Thus even though violent Jihad can create aggression that amounts to 'terrorism' in the non-Muslim world, in

⁶⁹ "The Koran", p.43, (3:5).

⁷⁰ Walzer, Micheal. Just and Unjust Wars. Basic Books - Perseus Books Group, New York: 2000.

Islam this is not perceived as such as long as it occurs within the guidelines on the use of violence, stipulated in the Quran. Contrary perceptions of violent Jihad persist in the non-Muslim world mainly because of the divergent perspectives from which the use of violence is defined.

Osama bin-Laden praised the perpetrators of the 11 September 2005 attacks by stating that "the great action you did which was first and foremost by the grace of Allah. This is the guidance of Allah and the blessed fruit of jihad... I was ordered to fight the people until they say there is no god but Allah, and his Prophet Muhammad... these events benefited Islam greatly...We will not stop our raids until you free our lands⁷¹". He also said that the "banner announcing jihad...has announced jihad against those who seek to soil the sanctuaries of Muslims and against the occupation of territory... I swear to God, that [these forces] will no longer know security before...all the infidels...leave...Islamic lands⁷²". Bin-Laden and some other extremists in the Islamic world contend that the 11 September 2005 attacks were a reaction to the hegemonic status that the United States (US) has established in the Middle-East, especially after the Afghan-Soviet War. This had political and economic implications that often violate the Shariat on governance and trade.

These Muslims oppose power-politics played by the US in countries such as Iraq, Iran and Libya. They contend that these politics mainly further US economic interests in the Middle-East. The Quran states that Islamic resources should be used mainly for Islamic benefits and can be exchanged with non-Muslims through negotiations and agreements. However, it strongly condemns unsolicited involvement of non-Muslims in Muslim affairs. Thus, some Muslims also emphasize US oil-trade in the Middle East from this perspective. They also condemn power hungry leaders in the Islamic world who facilitate such economics and politics and prevent the downward filtration effects of these engagements, as recommended by the Quran. Thus, Bin-Laden and these Muslims believe that, despite their intensity, the 11 September 2005 attacks were a legitimate Quranic reaction to preserve the sanctity of Islamic values in the Middle East. Extreme interpretations of the Quran's discourse on violence would legitimize this analysis. Contrarily, perceptions of state oriented violence and war in the non-Muslim world would reject

⁷¹ Video recording released in 13 December 2001, Transcript page1 and 6

⁷² Public statement made in Cairo on 8 October 2001

it.⁷³ However, it is important to remember that in Islam, the use of violence is a religious rather than a state oriented concept. Extreme as they maybe, acts of violence are legitimized by the Quran, as long as they are enacted to preserve the Shariat and executed within its discourse on violence. Acts that cannot be justified according to this discourse and an individual's interpretation of it are considered 'illegitimate' and as 'acts of terrorism' in Islam.

What role have interpretations of the Quran played in justifying and integrating terrorism?⁷⁴

I. The Quran and its sanction of interpretations:

The Quran permits varied religious interpretations through its discourse on *ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* is a term in Islamic law which allows for the process of religious decision making by independent interpretations of the Quran and the Shariat. The reason for *ijtihad* is that the Quran is an encompassing guide for all humanity. Thus its doctrines have to be applied to diverse social, political and economical settings, in various time periods. Even though many of the Quran's discourses are universal, some of them require specific geopolitical implementation. Thus, through its provision of *ijtihad*, the Quran allows Muslims to interpret its tenets so that they can appropriately cater to changing times and diverse private and public needs in Islamic communities across the globe. In this context, the Quran permits the Muslim clergy and Head of State in Islamic nations to assess its more specific or outdated discourses, and modify them to meet regional requirements in accordance with the will of Allah. These decisions should reflect the interest of the people of the state and create environments for religious adherence and freedoms. On the personal level, *ijtihad* vests each Muslim with the freedom to interpret the Quran and determine the extent to which it will influence their private and public lives. Muslims can use this interpretative freedom to determine their role in the three-fold relationship suggested by the Prophet. All decisions pertaining to *ijtihad* must be made after a detailed understanding of

⁷³ Walzer, Micheal. Just and Unjust Wars. Basic Books - Perseus Books Group, New York: 2000.

⁷⁴ Empirical evidence will be used only occasionally in this section mainly because Islamic history and practices have rarely been used in this manner, theoretically, to present a cause for Islamic terrorism. Individual analysis will be used to elaborate on those areas where empirical or causal evidence is scant.

Islamic tenets proposed by the Quran, and should emphasize the supremacy of Allah in the lives of all Muslims. Thus, an “important doctrine summation⁷⁵” established in the third century of Islam, known as the ‘Al-Aqida’ states that each Muslim has a right to his Quranic interpretations and methods as long as they correlate with larger notions of Quranic lawfulness.

Through *ijtihad* Muslims can decide which laws of the Shariat they wish to emphasize in their Quranic interpretations. The Shariat can accommodate these choices because, its private laws are proposed in a suggestive rather than compulsory manner.⁷⁶ Through *ijtihad* a Muslim can choose which of these laws is compulsory in his religious practice. In this manner, *Ijtihad* has furthered four essential Islamic practices. These are: Modernism, Pragmatism, Traditionalism and Fundamentalism. Modernists are those Muslims who emphasize the concept of ‘Islamic brotherhood’ as vital to Islam. However, they are secular in their worldly approach and rely on a conjunction of Muslim and non-Muslim intellectualism and scientific progress to further Islam.⁷⁷ Pragmatists emphasize the supremacy of Allah; however they believe that Islam cannot function exclusively in the global order. Thus they emphasize religious-coexistence as ordained by the Quran to further the will of God.⁷⁸ Traditionalists view Islam as “a comprehensive and living belief system that interacts with historical and cultural traditions of devout Muslims⁷⁹”. Thus, traditionalists rely on examples from the classical period of Islam to implement Quranic discourses, completely.⁸⁰ Pragmatists, Modernists and Traditionalists most often find moderate ways to implement their religious approaches. On the other hand, Fundamentalists, though they are influenced by the ideology of traditionalists, obtain these ideals through “aggressive political actions.⁸¹ They oppose the westernization of Islamic societies and advocate that the Shariat be

⁷⁵ Schwartz Stephen, “*The Two Faces of Islam – The House of Sa’ud from Tradition to Terror*”, p. 29.

⁷⁶ For instance on its law on alcohol consumption the Shariat asks a Muslim if he thinks it would be in his best interest to consume intoxicants. The model of the Prophet is presented in this regard, however the choice is ultimately left to the Muslim.

⁷⁷ A few prominent Modernists are: Sayyid Jamal Ad Din al-Afghani (1838-1897) is a modernist who encouraged the amalgamation of Western and Islamic education as a resource for development in the Muslim world.

⁷⁸ A few prominent pragmatists are: Muhammad Ali Jinnah of Pakistan, Muhammad Anwar-Sadat of Egypt and Shah of Iran in 1980.

⁷⁹ Husain Mir, “*Global Islamic Politics*”, p. 80-81.

⁸⁰ A few prominent Traditionalists are: Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi (1856-1921), Mawlana Mawdudi, Syed Qutb, Haji Muhammad Abidi. The Deoband School, Jaamait, Barewli, and Al-Hadith are some Islamic schools that further the traditional Islamic practices.

⁸¹ Husain Mir, “*Global Islamic Politics*”, p. 44.

followed as literally as possible.⁸² Despite variances on Quranic dictates, all these practices devote their religious interpretations to the pursuit of the will of God.

There are over seventy-three sub-sects that have emerged within Islam today. These have risen from five essential Islamic practices. These are: Shia, Sunni, Wahhabi, Sufi and Ahmaddiyat. The practices of the Shia sect are considered both traditional and fundamental.⁸³ The Sunnis are traditional and modern Islamists who emphasize the missionary discourses of the Quran.⁸⁴ The Wahhabis are traditional in their approach to Islam and they emphasize the Quran's discourse on violent Jihad to obtain their religious objectives.⁸⁵ Sufism arose in 800 A.D. as an extremely passive derivation of modernist and pragmatist Islamic.⁸⁶ Ahmaddiyat is a missionary version of Islam that arose in 1889. Its essence is to preserve traditional Islam through moderate means. In spite of the differences between these sects, they all believe that these religious interpretations and methods will ensure the will of Allah in Islam. According to the private provision of *ijtihad*, individuals can adhere to the dominant ideology of their sect, or follow their own private interpretations of these sects and their practices.

To avoid violence and other strife that could emerge from sect-formation, the Quran emphasizes that when following their interpretations Muslims should make provisions for the communal unison that is ordained by Allah for the overall well being of Islamic communities. Thus the Prophet suggests that Muslims must imbibe the virtues he exemplified while following *ijtihad* which were in keeping with the larger message of the Quran and the three-fold relationship. However he advises Muslims not to recreate his life in this effort. As Bernard Lewis suggests, literal adherence of this manner is "dangerous for two reasons. First it indulges the reader in the fanciful notion that by virtue of natural intelligence the text is...sensible... The second danger is that the power of private judgment may well obscure the meaning of the text by paying attention

⁸² A few prominent Fundamentalists are: Muhammad Ahmad Abdallah (a crusader for the creation of a puritanical Islamic in Sudan), Ayatollah Khomeini and Zia ul-Haq

⁸³ Based on these principles, the Shia community separated itself from the 'general Islamic community' soon after the death of the Prophet. The cause of this was that the Shias contended that Imam Ali, a cousin of the Prophet, was the second Muslim to embrace Islam and thus should be the Prophet's successor. Since their inception, Shias have emphasized the Quran's discourse on martyrdom as central to their religious interpretations. They have also highlighted radicalism as a method to obtain their religious principles. The extent to which this radicalism shows itself is contingent on the Quranic interpretations of each Shia Muslim.

⁸⁴ The Sunnis have faith in Allah and the Prophet alone.

⁸⁵ The Wahhabis are a radical off-shoot off Sunni-Islam that came into existence in the 1700s.

⁸⁶ Sufism focuses on the Quran's discourses on love, religious co-existence and self-discipline to further Islamic art, culture and literature.

to only what it says⁸⁷". Thus, efforts to literally recreate the life of the Prophet in contemporary times causes the emergence of fundamentalism, radicalism, traditionalism, religious violence or sect-formation, to an extent unintended by the Quran. To minimize such occurrences, the Prophet advised Muslims to use *ijtihad* in an informed manner, and to resolve the "mystery on how to implement Quranic revelations [and] promote new understandings⁸⁸" in Islam.

II. Ijtihad and Violent Jihad:

Violent Jihadis use *ijtihad* to emphasize their use of violence to create religious improvements in geopolitical settings. They also use this provision and aspects of traditional and fundamental⁸⁹ Islam to outline geopolitical conditions that require improvements on the basis of the Shariat. This is particularly the case when prolonged periods of geopolitical unrest have persisted in an area and based on their religious and historical understandings, they emphasize that their method of Islam would provide urgent remedies to these problems, and do so more than those practices that are already being followed in the region. The method of Wahhabism lends volatility to the aggression used by violent Jihadis. Thus, Osama bin-Laden who is a Sunni can emphasize Islamic traditionalism in his Quranic practices yet choose to emphasize Wahhabi methods. Through its being, *ijtihad* permits violent Jihadis to project these religious understandings as central to their Islamic practices. This consequently increases the legitimacy of the use of violence within Quranic parameters. Violent Jihadis also use *ijtihad* to emphasize historical examples that provide precedents for the legitimacy of their movement in Islam. These radical understandings and methods hold religious bearing under the provision of *ijtihad*, as long as they can be justified as acts that preserve the word of God.

For instance, violent Jihadis sometimes emphasize absolute adherence to the Quran and oppose westernization based on their understandings of traditional and fundamental Islam. Thus in 1981, violent Jihadis of the Al-Jihad group assassinated their Egyptian ruler Anwar Saddat. A significant premise for this was that Saddat was untraditional in his approach to Islam and

⁸⁷ Kimball Charles, "When Religion Becomes Evil", p. 58.

⁸⁸ Khundmiri Alam, "Secularism, Islam and Modernity, God – The Contemporary Debate: The Islamic Perspective", p. 65.

⁸⁹ Most often violent Jihadis receive their religious education at traditional madarssas funded by Islamic fundamentalists and/or traditionalists.

allowed western forces to permeate Egypt.⁹⁰ This was in turn corrupting the overall implementation of the Shariat and the communally exclusive well being ordained by God for Muslims. During the second Phase of the Insurgency in Kashmir, terrorist groups have aggressively imposed the veil and banned western video parlors in Kashmir. The religious basis for this argument is that westernization and non-Muslim impacts on Kashmiri societies is hampering the Shariat and Islamic well being. Thus *ijtihad* presents Muslims with tools that allow for those religious understandings that cause violent Jihad as a legitimate Quranic reaction, despite its extreme implications.

As stated earlier, violent Jihadis rely on an historical understanding of Wahhabism and other events in Islamic history to further substantiate the religious basis for their movement. In 1740, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab the founder of Wahhabism established that force could be used in an effort to preserve the will of God as outlined by the Prophet. Thereafter Wahhabis have used extreme manifestations of violent Jihad to establish the dominance of their religious interpretations in contrast to Sunni and Shia Muslims. For instance, in the 1800s, they used violent Jihad to impose Islamic traditionalism in Saudi Arabia. In 1820, they violently seized Peshawar from the Sikhs to establish traditional Islam in South Asia. The violence used by Wahhabis has included mass-murders, assassinations, abductions and aggressive threats. Thus Wahhabis claim that their duty to Jihad will continue “until all the world either adopts the Muslim faith or submits to Muslim rule⁹¹”. In 1940, Mawlana Mawdudi who was the founder of the Jaamait e-Islamia advocated the use of Wahhabi tenets in South Asia to resist British rule through Jihad. Based on his traditional interpretations of Islam, Mawdudi asked Muslims to utilize the means of war to implement the goal of the Quran and to ensure communal sovereignty in South Asia. The use of excessive violence in Wahhabism and Mawdudi’s advocacy of this practice in specific geopolitical conditions inspires the radical acts of violent Jihadis in contemporary times. Therefore Osama bin-Laden is known as the “son of Wahhabi radicalism⁹²” in his terrorist onslaught on the

⁹⁰ A long-standing power struggle between the government and various Islamic groups also contributed to Saddam’s unpopularity in Egypt.

⁹¹ Lewis, Bernard, “*The Crisis of Islam – Holy War and Unholy Terror*”, p. 31.

⁹² Schwartz Stephen, “*The Two Faces of Islam – The House of Sa’ud from Tradition to Terror*”, p.117.

US pertaining to the Middle East. Such similar religious patterns are also displayed by violent Jihadis Kashmir.⁹³

Ijtihad permits Muslims to interpret Islamic history and use it to verify their religious understandings of the Quran theologically. From this perspective some of the important historical examples that are important to the religious understandings and methodology of violent Jihadis are: the Prophet's life as a warrior, the Golden Age, the Crusades and European Colonization. These examples are particularly important from the view point of inter-communal conflicts. For instance, the military might used by the Prophet to overpower non-Muslims⁹⁴, establish control over Mecca and Medina and bring Islamic dominance, influences the propensity of violent Jihad found in contemporary Islamic societies. Violent Jihadis are specifically influenced by the fact that in 627 AD, the Prophet raided the Jewish tribe of Qurayzah and compelled them to accept his "right to proselytize without hindrance⁹⁵". Those Jews who disagreed with this right were "put to the sword⁹⁶". The decisive nature of Jihad used by the Prophet to over-power non-Muslims and establish the will of God provides religious ratification for the use of violent Jihad in contemporary societies where irregularity to the Shariat persists. This is particularly the case when the life of the Prophet is used to inculcate virtues in choices related to *ijtihad* and the three-fold relationship.

Further, the Golden Age is viewed as a religious condition that came about because of the Jihad waged by the Prophet. This necessitates the use of violence in contemporary times especially with those entities that threaten Islamic sovereignty. The Golden Age began in 600 A.D and lasted till the mid 11th century. In this period many non-Muslims converted to Islam. Islamic art, philosophy, empire, wealth and trade were at their zenith, compared to the non-Muslim world. This period of Islamic dominance was also marked by a great deal of religious coexistence, especially between Muslims and non-Muslims in Medieval Europe. The communal unity and well being of this period influences the goals of violent Jihadis in contemporary times. They aspire to create such conditions through the use of violence by overpowering non-Muslims,

⁹³ See: Venkatraman Amritha, "*Kashmir: Islam and Terror*", Chapter 3.

⁹⁴ A few of these are the Battle of Badr (624 AD) in which he and other Muslims defeated the Jewish tribe Quraysh, this was followed Battle of Uhud (625 AD) in which Muslims were defeated by the Jews, and the War of the Ditch (627 AD), Raid of the Jewish tribe Qurayzah.

⁹⁵ "*The Koran*", p. 7.

⁹⁶ "*The Koran*", p. 8.

especially those that might pose a threat to religious requirements in Islamic lands. This understanding is a significant factor in the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Aspects of the Jihad conducted during the Crusades, also inspire the emphasis and use of violence in Jihad. For instance, during the Crusades, in 1168, Yusef, the ruler of Egypt was called to engage in battle against the Christians. Yusef refused to join in the Crusades. Then, his Muslim clergy recited the Quran's discourse on violence to him and emphasized that Yusef had an obligation to God to join in the Crusades. Soon after, Yusef engaged in the Crusades and waged one of the most remarkable Jihads in Islamic history. Thus, Karen Armstrong states that, "it is not surprising that when he turned to religion he immediately dedicated himself to Jihad⁹⁷... [his] greatest strength was that ...religious fervor enabled him to present himself ...as a devout Muslim ruler who had practiced...the virtues of saintly scholars and warriors⁹⁸". Such valiant examples from history, inspire Jihadis to engage in violent inter-communal conflicts to preserve the sanctity of the Quran and the Shariat from Muslim or non-Muslim threats. However, *ijtihad* could not have this effect if the Quran itself did not sanction the use of violence to preserve Islamic well-being on the basis of *ijtihad*. Thus, Armstrong assesses that "there is a strong connection between the...crusades and...the conflicts⁹⁹" in the Islamic world even today and this link is both "analogical¹⁰⁰" and "causal¹⁰¹".

Violent Jihadis use the onset of European colonization to emphasize the requirement of violence to prevent non-Muslim domination of Islamic communities. Violent Jihadis believe that the reason for European Colonization was that in the post-Crusade period Muslims were reluctant in their adherence to the Quran. Thus, they not only encouraged non-Muslim and Muslim interactions that allowed for the domination of Islamic societies, but they also failed to engage in violent Jihad to prevent such domination. In contemporary times, violent Jihadis have invoked their movement even on minor Quranic pretexts and in local conditions to avoid conditions such as European colonization from reemerging. The fact that violent Jihadis use aggression to avoid

⁹⁷ Armstrong Karen, "Holy War – The Crusaders and Their Impact on Today's World", Anchor Books, New York 2001, p. 237.

⁹⁸ Armstrong Karen, "Holy War – The Crusaders and Their Impact on Today's World", p. 239.

⁹⁹ Armstrong Karen, "Holy War – The Crusaders and Their Impact on Today's World", p. 373.

¹⁰⁰ Armstrong Karen, "Holy War – The Crusaders and Their Impact on Today's World", p. 373.

¹⁰¹ Armstrong Karen, "Holy War – The Crusaders and Their Impact on Today's World", p. 374.

conditions like this became evident when the Al-Jihad stated that they assassinated Saddat because “he had abandoned the sacred duty of Jihad and made shameful peace¹⁰² with the enemies of God¹⁰³”.

Thus, the formulation of the religious ideology that causes violent Jihad can be credited to the existence of *ijtihad*. This is most crucial to the existence of violent Jihad itself as devoid of it, Jihadis would be ‘terrorists’ rather than ‘warriors of God’ in Islam. This philosophy involves an amalgam of religious interpretations derived from the Quran, Islamic practices and Islamic history. These individual interpretations fortify extreme understandings of the Quran’s discourse on violence and present them as legitimate religious reactions as long as they adhere to the will of God. Once created, this philosophy causes violence because it is used to understand and improve geopolitical events that are not congruent with the Shariat.

III. The Quran’s discourse on ‘revivalism’, Revivalism and Violent Jihad:

The Quran’s discourse on ‘revivalism’ and the contemporary movement of Islamic Revivalism (which is derived from ‘revivalism’) provides added context to the religious understandings that cause the emergence and progression of violent Jihad in contemporary times. For instance, according to the Quran’s doctrine of ‘revivalism’, Muslim communities are confronted with non-Muslim domination or un-Islamic governance, because they have not absolutely adhered to the Shariat. Thus through its discourse on ‘revivalism’, the Quran urges Muslims to revisit its tenets and find cause for opposing un-Islamic forces that bring about religious rectitude. In this process the Quran encourages traditional adherences that could influence violent Jihad and emphasizes the use of violence in order to protect full religious observance. The movement of Revivalism presents ‘revivalism’ as a cause for the onset of European colonization. It thus urges Muslims to rely on Quranic teachings to emancipate their societies in the post-colonial era and resist inter-communal aggressions, through any of the three forms of Jihad. When interpreted radically, Revivalism could necessitate violent Jihad and its religious understandings to urgently establish ‘revivalist’ ideals.

¹⁰² Ref: to the treaty signed between Anwar Saddat (Egypt) and Israel in 1971

¹⁰³ Armstrong Karen, “*Holy War – The Crusaders and Their Impact on Today’s World*”, p. 318.

According to Mohammad Nazar, in its discussion on 'revivalism', the Quran states that, "God has "perfected...religion for you and completed [his] favor to you"¹⁰⁴... He has revealed to you the Book with truth, confirming what preceded it...for the guidance of men, and the distinction between right and wrong... People of the Book! ... Allah will guide you to the paths of peace...He will lead them by His will from darkness to the light...We have ordained a life and path for each of you...Observe it [the Book] and keep from evil, so that you may find mercy...If you are in doubt of what We have revealed to you...for then you shall be lost...Observe what is revealed to you, and have patience...This Quran... promises the believer who does good work a rich reward, and threatens those who deny, the life to come with grievous scourge"¹⁰⁵... You gave them...the good things of life so they forgot Your warning and thus became lost peoples"¹⁰⁶...do not yield to your own lust lest it should turn you away from Allah's path"¹⁰⁷...O My servants, you who have sinned against your souls, do not despair of Allah's mercy, for he forgives all sins. He is the Forgiving One, the Merciful"¹⁰⁸...O Believers! Shall I point out to you a bargain that will save you from a woeful scourge? Have faith in Allah and His Apostles and fight for His Cause with your wealth and your persons. That would be best for you"¹⁰⁹". According to John L. Esposito¹¹⁰, the Quranic philosophy of 'revivalism' has given rise to the following historical movements: the early Kharijite and Shiite rebellions, the Umayyad practice, the 'Islamic rationale' for Abbasid revolution, the reformist activities of Taqi al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) and Indian Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. Esposito explains that all these examples were a response to the socio-moral corruption of Muslim society. This called for a return to the fundamentals of Islam to restore and revivify an errant community. Therein lay 'the historical roots for the long tradition of Islamic revival, a process of renewal and reform which have inspired both pre-modern and modern Muslim reform movements'.

¹⁰⁴ Mohammad Nazar, "Commandments by God in the Quran", p. 171.

¹⁰⁵ Mohammad Nazar, "Commandments by God in the Quran", p. 3-21.

¹⁰⁶ Mohammad Nazar, "Commandments by God in the Quran", p. 362.

¹⁰⁷ Mohammad Nazar, "Commandments by God in the Quran", p. 360.

¹⁰⁸ Mohammad Nazar, "Commandments by God in the Quran", p. 364.

¹⁰⁹ Mohammad Nazar, "Commandments by God in the Quran", p. 72.

¹¹⁰ Author of , "Islamic Threat – Myth or Reality", Oxford University Press, New York 1992, and 'Islam and Politics', Syracuse University Press, Syracuse 1984

The imperative to ameliorate geopolitical uncertainties emphasised by 'revivalism' reiterates the understandings that Jihadis have of the Quran's discourse on violence. Violent Jihadis then use their interpretations of Islamic theology to present aggression as a legitimate course of action for religious progress within the ideal of 'revivalism' and in Islamic societies. Ferdoz Syed¹¹¹ explains, that "economic deprivation was not the reason for me or others to join the violent movement. The Kashmir issue is a serious psychological complexity that is embedded in a two-fold process, namely, historic and Islamic identity. Holding arms is not the start of the first phase of the militancy. Becoming a crusader is in the mind, it is the first place for a person wanting to make a change, picking up the gun is the last stage¹¹²". Extreme understandings of the Quran's discourse on violence and 'revivalist' comprehensions of geopolitical misgivings formulate the religious ideology that causes violent Jihad, and its participants as 'warriors of God'.

The use of violent Jihad for this purpose is also validated by Mawlana Mawdudi's specific emphasis on Jihad as an imperative to obtain 'revivalist' objectives. Mawdudi was a traditional Islamic theologian from Pakistan who coined the Jaamait e-Islamia¹¹³. Through this organization and his own ideals, Mawdudi encouraged Muslims in South Asia to oppose British colonization. Extreme interpretations of Mawdudi's ideals encourage Jihads to oppose non-Muslim domination and Muslim misgivings through violence in contemporary times. In a lecture series titled 'Jihad in Islam', Mawdudi contended, "Jihad is a revolutionary ideology and programme which seeks to alter the social order of the...world and rebuild it in conformity with [Islamic] own tenets and ideals¹¹⁴". Muslims must wage Jihad when they "wish to usurp other people's rights and launch an attack on them... When a person or group arises to carry out a revolution ...to establish a new system in conformity with the ideology of Islam, he or they should...execut[e] acts of devotion for the Cause...The objective of the struggle should be completely free from the taint of selfish motives...The only reward in view should be to gain the favor of God¹¹⁵". He explained that Islam is a 'comprehensive system which envisages annihilating tyrannical and evil systems that afflict

¹¹¹ Leader of the Muslim Jahbaz Force (MJF) which was dominant during the first phase of the Insurgency.

¹¹² Ferdoz Syed, Interview given to Amritha Venkatraman in February 2004

¹¹³ An institution of religious learning which originated in Pakistan and now exists in other countries as well, especially in South Asia.

¹¹⁴ Mawdudi Abul A'La. "Jihad in Islam-2", International Islamic Federation of Students Organization, Al-Faisal Printing Co., Kuwait (year of publication unavailable), p. 4-5.

¹¹⁵ Mawdudi Abul, "Jihad in Islam-2", p. 9.

Islamic communities. It enforces its own program of reform that it deems best for the well being of mankind. Islamic animosity is directed against tyranny, strife, immorality and against the attempt of any individual to transgress his natural limits and expropriate what is not apportioned to him by the natural law of God. When mankind is being subject to repression, discrimination and exploitation, it is the duty of the righteous to go to their succor¹¹⁶. Upon the completion of Jihad, an “Islamic government [should be] founded.... Muslims are categorically barred from assuming despotic powers¹¹⁷”. Violent Jihadis emphasize the ‘revivalist’ ideology for Jihad presented by Mawdudi. They use it to reiterate the premise for their own religious interpretations in contemporary geopolitical conditions. This ideology then lends legitimacy for the onset and progression of violent Jihad within a Quranic context and especially in inter-communal conflicts. Thus Syed states that the “religious philosophies of revivalists such as Mawlana Mawdudi, Syed Qutb and Al-Bana are essential to the global Islamic sentiment which influences the ‘crusader mentality’¹¹⁸”.

In the 1960, Syed Qutb, an Islamic theologian from Egypt, combined the Quranic idea of ‘revivalism’ and Mawdudi’s philosophies to coin a contemporary movement called ‘Islamic Revivalism’. As indicated above, the objective of this movement was to emphasize and use Islamic tenets to emancipate the Islamic community and regain its lost affluence in the post-colonial world, especially by averting non-Muslim domination. This movement elucidated the role of the Quranic in the life of all Muslims and presented it as the “as the sole cultural, social and political standard of behavior among Muslims¹¹⁹”. Qutb used Islamic theology and history to reiterate this role as a method to obtain the Revivalist agenda. Qutb suggested five steps to achieve these objectives. The first was to ensure “the spread of Islam from homes, *masjids* (mosques) and madarssas into mainstream of not only the socio-cultural life of Muslim societies, but the legal, economic and political spheres of the modern day Muslim nation-states as well¹²⁰”. The second was to use *ijtihad* and Islamic theology for “the reformulation and revision of Islamic

¹¹⁶ Idea paraphrased from Mawdudi Abul, “*Jihad in Islam-2*”.

¹¹⁷ Mawdudi Abul, “*Jihad in Islam-2*”, p. 29.

¹¹⁸ Ferdoz Syed, Interview given to Amritha Venkatraman in February 2004

¹¹⁹ Kepel Gilles, “*Jihad – The Trial of Political Islam*”, I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., London 2003, p. 25.

¹²⁰ Husain Mir, “*Global Islamic Politics*”, p. 9-11.

theory and practice in light of contemporary times¹²¹. The third step was for Muslims to rely on the Quran's socio-economic discourse to bridge the economic gaps created in Islam because of colonization. The fourth was to use a "religious approach to solving contemporary problems¹²²" and engage in economic and scientific exchanges with the west however, based on the guidelines of the Quran on inter-communal relationships. And the fifth was to maintain "strong anti-imperialist and anti colonialist undercurrents [and] end to international dependence¹²³" so that Quran could "champion the development of a united Islamic bloc¹²⁴". Qutb believed that these religious measures could redirect the Islamic community towards the Quranic path. Following this path would reinstate the will of God that would bring well being to private and public affairs in an Islamic community.

The initial victory to the Arabs in their 1973 war with Israel, the success of the Khomeini Revolution in Iran and the Afghan victory in their war with the Soviets in 1979 are viewed as practical outcomes that came about because Muslims followed the Revivalist agenda, especially pertaining to Jihad. Islamic communities across the globe are implementing Revivalism even today. In fact, Zia ul-Haq's theocratic regime in Pakistan from 1977 to 1988 is outlined as a Revivalist effort. Revivalism itself has varied manifestations mainly because it relies on *ijtihad* and emphasizes the role of the Quran in contemporary settings. The categorizations, methods and principles in Islam and Jihad, apply in their full extent to Revivalism. Thus, governance in Pakistan during the time of Zia was an example of 'Fundamental' Revivalism. On the other hand the governance in Turkey is an example of 'Modernist' Revivalism.

Similarly, the ideology and movement of violent Jihad itself can be seen as a Revivalist manifestation. This is also because, as Giles Kepel states, in his discourse on Revivalism, Qutb failed to specify the extent of force and geopolitical conditions that pertained to his movement. Thus, he allowed these gaps to be filled by individual views of the Quran. This increased the reliance of the contemporary Islamic society on *ijtihad* and heightened the possibility of using Islamic violence to obtain Revivalist objectives. By contemporizing the Quran's discourse on what

¹²¹ Husain Mir, "Global Islamic Politics", p.9-11.

¹²² Husain Mir, "Global Islamic Politics", p. 9-11.

¹²³ Husain Mir, "Global Islamic Politics", p. 9-11.

¹²⁴ Husain Mir, "Global Islamic Politics", p. 9-11.

is 'Islamic' and what is not, 'revivalism' and Jihad, Revivalism reiterates the context in which violent Jihad could arise. Thereafter extreme interpretations of the Quran's discourse on violence, Islamic practices and Islamic history, secure the progression of violent Jihad in these conditions under the premise of Revivalism. This is especially the case in those areas where anomalies to the Shariat have persisted in the long run. Thus US involvement with Israel, Russian influence over Chechnya and India's occupation of Kashmir could warrant Revivalism and violent Jihad from a Quranic perspective. The events of September 11, 2001, the Insurgency in Kashmir and the activities of the HAMAS in Palestine can be presented as acts of Revivalism in which violent Jihadis relegated "political combat to a secondary concern¹²⁵" and used the notions of the "pre-revelation abyss¹²⁶" and "sovereignty and adoration¹²⁷" of Allah to obtain their religious objectives. However, in order for this effect to occur, the interpretation of Revivalism itself has to be extreme.

What explains the persistence of Islamic terrorism?

I. Recurring Struggle:

Islamic violence threatens to persist in a region because of the extremities inherent to the Quranic and Revivalist ideology causing violent Jihad. Influenced by these extremities, violent Jihadis aspire to obtain their religious ideals within a geopolitical setting through the use of maximum force and as literally as possible. According to the Quran, a violent Jihadi can relinquish his violent struggle only when he dies or his religious objectives are obtained. From this perspective, the religious basis for Islamic terrorism threatens to persist, as long as political dynamics prevent the objectives of the Jihadis from being obtained or the objectives themselves are redefined. In most cases, the objectives of violent Jihad remain the same for the duration of the movement and political conflicts prevent the objective of violent Jihad from materializing. The evolution of violent Jihad in this effect lends political, military and social strife to the causes of the

¹²⁵ Kepel Gilles, "*Political Jihad*", p. 23.

¹²⁶ Kepel Gilles, "*Political Jihad*", p. 24.

¹²⁷ Kepel Gilles, "*Political Jihad*", p. 26.

essential conflict itself and perpetuates its own evolution.¹²⁸ The simultaneous presence of organizational support and human resources is vital for a religious ideology to further Islamic terrorism. If these three ingredients of violent Jihad are not present concurrently then the recurrent effect will limit itself to an ideological extent. This could lead to the generation of organizational and human resource support in the future and from alternative sources. This recurring nature of violent Jihad can completely stop only if a violent Jihad chooses to alter his religious interpretations of the Quran and Revivalism, especially in the context of the Kashmir crisis.

The Agra Summit held between India and Pakistan in July 2001 to remedy the Kashmir crisis is an example of the manner in which religious ideology and politics in the Kashmir crisis encourage religious violence in the region. From January to June 2001, approximately 472 civilians, 284 Indian Security Forces and 723 Jihadis¹²⁹ had already been killed due to Islamic terrorism in Kashmir. Extreme Quranic and Revivalist interpretations on the use of violence were integral to the violent Jihad that caused these deaths.¹³⁰ The issue of ending cross-border terrorism and conducting a plebiscite in Kashmir were essential to the success of these talks. Pakistan's demand was that the bilateral territorial dispute in Kashmir must be decided on the basis of a people's vote. India agreed to this demand and made the end of cross-border terrorism sponsored by Pakistan a prerequisite for the vote. Pakistan denied any involvement with the terrorists operating in Kashmir. Pakistan also stated that if Jihadis were operating in Kashmir at all they were not terrorists but religious 'freedom fighters'. The Agra Summit failed because of the lack of any middle ground between India and Pakistan over matters pertaining to the resolution of the Kashmir crisis. The diplomatic breakdown of this Summit brought the bi-lateral negotiations between India and Pakistan to a virtual stand still which prevailed till early 2003.

Violent Jihadis in Kashmir, viewed the Agra Summit based on their religious interpretations and concluded that India had undermined the interests of an Islamic nation. This, according to the Quran, warranted the continuation and intensification of violent Jihad. The

¹²⁸ For details see: Venkatraman Amritha. "*Kashmir: Islam and Terrorism*", Chapter 4

¹²⁹ British High Commission: Terrorism related Deaths – 2001.

¹³⁰ For details see: Venkatraman Amritha. "*Kashmir: Islam and Terrorism*", Chapter 3

increase in religious violence led to an increase in Indian military activities to counter terrorism. Thus, from July 2001 to December 2001, over 529 civilians, 385 Indian Security forces and 1361 Jihadis were killed due to terrorism in Kashmir.¹³¹ These killings only worsened the political divide between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, and invigorated the extreme religious basis for Islamic terrorism in the region. Further, the contemporary interaction between India, Pakistan and the Insurgents continues to undermine the democratic aspirations of Kashmiris. This provides geopolitical contexts for the Quranic and Revivalist ideology of the pro-independence Jihadis in Kashmir. Thus by hindering the religious objectives of one or both Phases of the Insurgency, the political evolution of the Kashmir crisis ensures the ideological persistence of Islamic terrorism in Kashmir. Conversely, the evolution of violent Jihad since 1989 has reinstated historical reasons and created contemporary cause for the political evolution of the Kashmir crisis itself.

As long as the objectives of violent Jihadis in either Phase remain unfulfilled from a social and political perspective, extreme interpretations of Quranic and Revivalist themes will continue to provide the religious basis for violent Jihad in Kashmir. Thus, Masood Azhar, leader of the pro-Pakistan Insurgent group Jaish e-Muhammad states that the “true and highest sovereignty lies with Allah Ta’ala only...it is compulsory upon him to keep his hand and heart subordinate to Allah and His Shari’ah¹³²”. He also asserts, “We would soon cause them [India] a smashing blow to assert our authority. We would continue the armed struggle. We have not launched jihad at the dictation of anybody and so we would not stop jihad at anybody’s dictation too...We do not care whether the world considers us terrorists¹³³”. Comments such as these assert that religious interpretations are integrated in the political premise for violent Jihad. These together with material discussed above, also indicate that Quranic and Revivalist interpretations underline violent Jihad, especially when matters pertain to interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims. In this context, the relationship between political entities in a geopolitical conflict cause for the ideology and practice of violent Jihad. Conversely, the potential for Islamic terrorism along

¹³¹ British High Commission: Terrorism related Deaths – 2001.

¹³² *Guardians of Deen and Country*, -Masood Azhar, <http://www.dalistan.org/mughalstan/mujahid/azhar005.html> (Date Accessed: March 28, 2005)

¹³³ Mazood Azhar, *Jaish Threatens ‘Smashing Blow’ in Kashmir*, Press Trust of India, October 15, 2001

geopolitical lines will continue as long as extreme Quranic and Revivalist interpretations for the use of violence persist.

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