INTRODUCTION
Religious fundamentalism is a new global phenomenon in world politics. It is in part the product of the political vacuum created by the demise of the Soviet empire and in greater part, the failure of the secular alternatives in 20th century, particularly in many post-colonial societies. While these societies continue to live in their cultural framework, the ruling elites have not paid sufficient attention to economic prosperity and political freedom required for the structural transformation. With the growing sense of discontent, people strive to seek refuge in religious roots as a panacea of prevailing ills. Fundamentalism, however, is not an expression of a religious revival, but rather a pronouncement of a new order based on the selective retrieval of doctrines, beliefs and practices from the sacred past. As defined by Bruce Lawrence, fundamentalism is "the affirmation of religious authority as holistic and absolute, admitting of neither criticism nor reduction; it is expressed through the collective demand that specific creedal and ethical dictates derived from the scriptures be publicly recognised and legally enforced."¹

The underlying idea, according to Ernest Gellner, "is that a given faith is to be upheld firmly in its full and literal form, free of compromises, softening, re-interpretation or diminution."²

Fundamentalism in the Western context is not new; the term was used for the first time in the 1920s with reference to a group of US Protestant churches and organisations opposed to 'modernism' within Christianity. As the pace of social change accelerated, Protestant Christians felt threatened by the higher criticism of the Bible and the spread of philosophical skepticism.³ They sought to reaffirm their belief in the literal text of the Bible, and advocated strict patriarchal moralism. While these Christians called themselves fundamentalists, the term acquired a strongly pejorative association in the minds of liberals and modernists. In the next few decades, the term came to be used for all religious revival movements outside the Protestant tradition that sought to return to "fundamentals" and to any movement seeking power for the purpose of governance according to religious values and principles.


**Fundamentalism and Islam**

The use of fundamentalism in connection with Islam spread rapidly after Iran's revolution and comparable Muslim movements elsewhere - so much so that by 1990, the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defined it not only as "the strict maintenance of traditional Protestant beliefs," but also as "the strict maintenance of ancient or fundamental doctrines of any religion, especially Islam." By sheer dint of usage, Islamic fundamentalism has become the most cited fundamentalism of all. Journalists, ever on the lookout for a shorthand way to refer things new and unfamiliar, gravitated toward the term fundamentalism, which evoked the anti-modernism that Ayatollah Khomeini seemed to personify. Yet the more popular Islamic fundamentalism became in the media, the more scholars of Islam recoiled from it. Some thought that the term fundamentalism failed to capture the methodology and style of Iran's revolution and comparable Muslim movements. Others argue that its use in the context of Islam could be misleading, because fundamentalist is a Christian term, which denotes certain Protestant churches and organisations, more particularly those that maintain the literal divine origin and inerrancy of the Bible. In this they oppose the liberal and modernist theologians, who tend to be more critical of the scripture. Among Muslim theologians there is as yet no such liberal or modernist approach to the Qur'an, and all Muslims, in their attitude to the text of the Qur'an, are in principle at least fundamentalists in the positive sense of the term.5

Other scholars, particularly those who sympathise with the new Muslim movements have protested that the label of fundamentalist unfairly stigmatises forward-thinking Muslims. John Esposito, America's foremost apologist for Islam-driven movements, has made this argument against using fundamentalism in an Islamic context. Esposito has added that fundamentalism "is often equated with political activism, extremism, fanaticism, terrorism, and anti-Americanism, a prejudgment by label."6 Unlike Bernard Lewis, who is prepared to make a concession to widespread usage, Esposito avoids using the term fundamentalism because he views the rise of Islamic

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movements since the 1970s as the latest resurgence of a cyclical phenomenon that has occurred throughout the Islamic history.⁷

Likewise, Noorani in his book on jihad has argued, "the so-called Islamic fundamentalist is an imposter. He has misused a noble faith as a political weapon. Of course, Islam does have a political vision, but it is far removed from the Islam which many Muslims and most non-Muslims imagine it to be."⁸ Mark Juergensmeyer contends that the term is less descriptive than it is accusatory; it is "an imprecise category for making comparisons across cultures". He prefers to call it as "religious nationalism" confronting the secular state in the post-Cold War global order.⁹ So does Nikki Keddie who has chosen a more neutral term to describe this phenomenon as the "New Religious Politics or NRP".¹⁰ However, Edward Said, defender of Palestine and critic of Western representations of Islam, has not so much objected to the term as to the way it has come to be employed against Islam. Instead of scholarship, the deliberately created associations between Islam and fundamentalism ensure that the average reader comes to see Islam and fundamentalism as essentially the same thing. In this usage, claimed Said, "Fundamentalism equals Islam equals everything-we-must-now-fight-against, as we did with communism during the Cold War."¹¹ In brief, Said argues that homo Islamicus does not exist; it is nothing more than Western invention.

The term fundamentalism has a few academic defenders as well. In 1988, the University of Chicago, backed by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences launched the Fundamentalism Project, devoted to comparing trends in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and even Confucianism. The project began with the hypothesis that the acceleration of modernity was forcing the faithful of all religions into a reactive (and sometimes violent) mode. Its organisers have defined fundamentalism as "a strategy, or

set of strategies, by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or group...by a selective retrieval of doctrines, beliefs, and practices from a sacred past." Some 150 expert on diverse religious traditions have contributed to the project, and their papers appeared in five hefty volumes, bearing titles like *Fundamentalisms Observed* and *Fundamentalisms and the State*. Legitimising the term as a tool of comparison across religions, the research project has demonstrated that "those people and groups now known as fundamentalists emerge from different religions of the world, or different holy books, or have different interpretations of the same holy book, or follow no holy book at all but a venerable tradition instead." These fundamentalists "see themselves as actors in an eschatological drama unfolding in the mind of God and directing the course of human history."13

A leading American sociologist also claims that "I am not convinced by the arguments that advocate limiting the concept of fundamentalism to Protestantism or Christianity. Since all concepts originate in a particularistic historical setting and language from which they are abstracted - - - the concept of fundamentalism is not necessarily 'tainted' or impregnated by its Protestant origin, although we do have to take pains to consciously eliminate Christian peculiarities in order to transform it into a universally applicable sociological concept."14 The strongest argument for fundamentalism has been its sheer ubiquity. In an entry entitled "Fundamentalism" published in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* in 1995, historian John Voll has enumerated the most common objections to the term and made a list of alternatives. These include Islamism, *intégrisme*, neo-normative Islam, neo-traditional Islam, Islamic revivalism, and Islamic nativism. "However," he has added with a hint of resignation, "fundamentalism remains the most commonly utilised identification of the various revivalist impulses among Muslims. More technically accurate terms and


neologisms have not gained wide acceptance."15 Similarly, Bassam Tibi has chosen to describe Islamic fundamentalism as a political ideology based on selective and arbitrary politicisation of the religion. It, according to Tibi, “does not address religious beliefs, but the nature of state, society and world politics, which are articulated in religious symbols.”16

Given the controversy surrounding the use of the term, it has become conventional in the literature on Muslim societies to distinguish ‘Islamic’ from ‘Islamist’ movements. The former refers to any religion oriented trend and the latter, the specific Islamic variety of fundamentalism that seeks to increase Islam’s role in society and politics, usually with the goal of an Islamic state.17 The term Islamism first appeared in French in the mid-eighteenth century. But it did not refer to the modern ideological use of Islam, which had not yet come into being. It was instead a synonym for the religion of the Muslims, which was then known in French as mahometisme, the religion professed and taught by the Prophet Muhammad.18 Islamism began to disappear from the lexicon from about the turn of the twentieth century, as many scholars simply preferred the shorter and purely Arabic term, Islam. In summation, the term Islamism enjoyed its first run, lasting from Voltaire to the First World War, as a synonym for Islam; Enlightened scholars and writers generally preferred it to Mohammedanism. Eventually both terms were replaced by Islam, the Arabic name of the faith and a word free of either pejorative or comparative associations. There was no need for any other term until the rise of an ideological and political interpretation of Islam challenged scholars and commentators to come up with an alternative to distinguish Islam as modern ideology from Islam as a faith.

15 Quoted by Martin Kramer, “Coming to Terms: Fundamentalism or Islamism”, Middle East Quarterly, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Spring 2003).
17 For a definition of Islamism, see Bobby S. Sayyid, A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism (London: Zed Press, 1997), pp. 16-18.
In 1984, the French sociologist of Islam, Gilles Kepel, published an influential book with the subtitle *Les movements islamistes dans Egypt contemporaine*. In 1985, it appeared in English translation as Muslim Extremism in Egypt. The English translator had difficulty with Kepel’s extensive use of *islamiste* and translated it as “Islamicist.” A footnote in the translation made this apology: The term Islamicist is used throughout to render the French ‘islamiste.’ Initially, the term encountered some principled resistance. The American anthropologist Henry Munson, Jr., in a book published in 1988 listed the disadvantages of fundamentalism, but decided to retain it anyway. “I cannot think of an adequate alternative term to characterise those Muslims who advocate a strictly Islamic policy. The term Islamist strikes me as a clumsy neologism.”

Clumsy or not, however, Islamism began to displace fundamentalism in specialised usage. It particularly appealed to scholars who disliked the supposedly pejorative associations of fundamentalism. Graham Fuller, a RAND analyst made an early statement in its favour. Fundamentalism, he tried to argue forcefully in 1991, “is an unsatisfactory term, suggesting as it does a strict reversion to the institutions of a medieval or even early Islamic state. This more recent phenomenon is better termed Islamism, suggesting not so much theology, whose implications are not at all old-fashioned, but thoroughly modern.” In 1993, the political scientist Louis Cantori likewise argued that fundamentalism conveys a sense of extremism and dismissal. In reference to Islam, in the world of scholarship, and now internally within U.S. agencies, it is being abandoned as being prejudicial and polemical. Instead, the term Islamism is used increasingly to denote the political manifestation of the religion of Islam. “Islamism” permits one to more dispassionately make distinction between extremist and mainstream Islam. While the term “Political Islam” generally refers to the movements

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and groups within the broader fundamentalist revival with a specific political agenda, "Islamists" are Muslims with political goals.

However, there are Islamists who operate outside the legal framework and espouse violence to achieve their aims are properly called extremists. As Islamism gained currency, it too became associated with benighted extremism, from the Taliban to the Algerian Armed Islamic Group, culminating in the mega-terror of Osama bin Laden. Critics of Islamism have found it easy to add Islamism to the list of dangerous twentieth century "isms" that has defied the liberal West and gone down to defeat. “Islamism Is Fascism” - thus ran the headline of an interview with analyst Daniel Pipes. Islamism is the New Bolshevisim” - thus went the headline of an op-ed column by former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.22 The entry of Islamism into common English usage has not improved the image of these movements and paradoxically made it easier to categorise them as threats of the first order. As the Muslim equivalent of fascists or Bolshevists, they are clearly marked as the enemies of democracy and freedom. Ultimately, of course, the problem of these movements is not what they are called; it is what they do. As long as these movements continue to spawn, nurture, or tolerate the most violent forces in contemporary world, they would bring stigma to whatever term is applied to them.

Jihadism/Jihadi Islam

On the whole, the debate over usage in the West has borne little relationship to the parallel debate in the Muslim world over what to call the new Islamic movements. The arguments on behalf of various Arabic, Persian, and Urdu terms are a topic that deserves its own treatment, based on other sources. From time to time, leaders of the new movements generally follow the lead of their Western sympathisers in rejecting the use of "fundamentalism." To all intents and purposes, however, Islamic fundamentalism and Islamism have become synonyms in contemporary Western usage. Since the September

22 Eric Boehlert, "Islamism Is Fascism: An Interview with Daniel Pipes," Salon.com, November 9, 2001 at http://www.danielpipes.org/article/81; Margaret Thatcher, "Islamism Is the New Bolshevisim," The Guardian, February 12, 2002. In the body of the article, Thatcher did not use the term "Islamism." "Islamic extremism today, like Bolshevisim in the past, is an armed doctrine," she wrote. "It is an aggressive ideology promoted by fanatical, well-armed devotees. And, like communism, it requires an all-embracing long-term strategy to defeat it."
11 terror attacks in the United States, the term ‘jihadism’ has been in vogue in the place of fundamentalism. At present, jihadism is used to refer to the most violent movements in contemporary Islam, including that of the al-Qaida. The concept of jihad otherwise refers to inner struggle of moral discipline or striving towards worthy goal, which is reintroduced in the fundamentalist literature as a form of political struggle through direct action. It is the revolutionary path of Islam that not merely rejects the traditional notions of passivity, but also justifies the use of force to combat the Muslim backslider. It confers the right to revolt and hence, a readiness to fight by whatever means to liberate the mankind from the present state of godless Jahiliyya- the pagan ignorance - comparable to the conditions of pre-Islamic Arabia.

Among the Muslim thinkers and activists whose doctrinal vision of the world and revolutionary rhetoric inspire contemporary Islamic fundamentalism, the names of Maulana Abul Ala Maududi of Pakistan, Sayyid Qutb and Abd al-Salam Faraj of Egypt figure prominently. Over the years, the theoretical formulations advanced by these men and circulated through educational networks, especially those supervised by the clergy have contributed to the moulding of the Muslim mindset to the idea that they are under constant threat from the West and from their jahiliyya rulers. No wonder the fundamentalists’ call for “the Return to Islam” and waging holy war to save the Umma from Satan, represented by the secular Western culture has incited direct action by the Sunni Muslims worldwide.


24 The word Jihad which is derived from the trilateral Arabic root jahad (to strive, to endeavour, to exert oneself) and the verb jaahada means exertion of one's power in Allah's path, that is, to spread the belief in Allah and to make his word supreme over this world. For details, see Mustansir Mir, “Jihad in Islam” in Hadia Dajani -Shakeel and Ronald A. Messier (eds.), Jihad and Its Times (Ann Arbor: Centre for Near Eastern and North African Studies, University of Michigan, 1991), pp. 112-113; Rudolph Peters, Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam (Princeton, New Jersey: Markus Weiner publishers, 1998), pp. 2-6; D. Cook, Understanding Jihad (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).


Maulana Maududi (1903-1979), the founder of the Pakistani Jamaat-i-Islami party has, for example, given jihad a pivotal role in Muslims' struggle to establish God's universal sovereignty (hakimiyya) on earth. In his book *Al-Jihad fi Sabeel Allah (Jihad in Islam)*, he defines jihad as a total and continuous struggle in pursuit of "God's just order in the World." Such a conception of jihad recognises no distinction between the offensive and defensive jihad - a theoretical-legal formulation worked out by the classical Muslim jurists. In an offensive war, the religious duty of jihad is collective to be discharged by the Community as a whole, whereas jihad becomes an individual obligation when the Community is engaged in a war to defend itself. Influenced by Maududi's ideas, the Egyptian Islamist Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) has underlined in his numerous writings the inevitability of jihad to bring about the universal Islamic system. Jihad in Islam, according to Qutb, is permanent, borderless and timeless. "In order to propagate the oneness of God on earth" writes Qutb, "and to put an end to the power of those who, by word or deed, challenge His omnipotence, Islam allows Muslims to fight. Such is the only war allowed in Islam". Implicit in this is his advocacy of jihad as a struggle between the believers of God and the non-believers in which the use of force in combating the latter is legitimised. Religious war, as Qutb forcefully argues in *This Religion of Islam*, is the only form of killing that is morally sanctioned.

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29 Sayyid Qutb, *Islam and Universal Peace* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1993), P. 10. Qutb was the leader of the Muslim Brethren, which split from President Nasser's secular socialist revolution in 1954. Consequently, he spent most of his remaining life in prison until he was executed in 1966. His brief stay in U. S. in the 1940s seems to have sharpened his anti-Western militancy and his contempt for Muslim modernists. See Adnan A. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundation of Radical Islamism* (Westport: Praeger, 2005), 155-169.

On the whole, Qutb's message contains violence of tone, but he is not as explicit in recommending the acts of terror to the Islamic warriors as Abd al-Salam Faraj, a leading member of the Egyptian Jihad Organisation who was executed in 1982 for his part in the assassination of the president Anwar al-Sadat. Although Qutb is regarded as the intellectual prophet of contemporary Islamic fundamentalism, it is Faraj's conceptualisation of jihad as "confrontation and blood" that has inspired many young Muslim activists, particularly from the Arab world to become istishhadi (he who martyrs himself) in defense of their faith. In his booklet, *The Neglected Duty* published in the early 1980s in Cairo, Faraj has presented a remarkably cogent argument for waging war against the enemies of Islam. By grounding the activities of the Islamic terrorists firmly on the sacred text of the Qur'an and the biographical accounts of the Prophet, he has accorded religious legitimation to the use of techniques of terror to fight the apostates within the Muslim community and the enemies from without.  

The statements and *fatwas* issued since 1996 issued by Osama bin Laden, the fugitive Saudi financier accused by the U. S. of masterminding the September 11 airborne assaults, echoes the Qutbian perspective of virtue and violence, and ideas of Faraj on the Islamic obligation of jihad. No wonder, Western analysts have variously dubbed Sayyid Qutb as "the philosopher of Islamic terror" and as "the godfather ideologue of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda." The text of his 1998 decree published in a London-based Arabic language daily, in which bin Laden cites Quranic verses to justify the killing of the uninvolved bystanders in a religious war bear this out amply. So does his 1996 "Declaration of War against the Americans", which provides useful insights into an ideology that draws on radical *Salafism*. In short, Salafism is a minoritarian tendency within Islam, whose central features were crystallised in the teachings of a 14th century scholar, Taqi al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya. The essence of the *Salafi* ideology is to

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31 For an discussion of Faraj's ideas on holy war, see Johannes J. G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty, the Creed of Sadat's Assassins, and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan, 1986).


reform the religion by emulating the generation of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions who are referred to as al-salaf al-salih, (the pious ancestors), whence the name Salafi. Another salient feature of Salafism is that war against the Muslim rulers is permissible if they fail in their primary duty to rule according to the shari'a (Islamic law), as its absence conduces to the pollution of Islam by idolatry. This stance is a significant departure from Sunni political traditions, which prohibit the right to rebel against a Muslim ruler however bad he may be. In contrast, “right to rebel” against a ruler who compromises with Islam is justified by the Shiite traditional teachings, partly due to the injustice done to the House of Ali, the fourth Caliph, and partly, the spiritual – political status of the Ulama.

In theological terms, Ibn Tamiyya is the main intellectual inspiration for the contemporary jihadists for two reasons: first, his resistance to the Mongol (tatar) invaders and crusaders settlers of his time; second, his willingness to declare the fellow Muslims who did not share his views as infidels. The latter is called the act of takfir—that is to judge someone as infidel. Historically, however, the mainstream Salafiyya has been much more concerned with the state of Muslim themselves than with relations between Islam and the outside world. For example, Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt during the late 1920s, argued that the menace of the West and its supporters in the Muslim Community could only be conquered by the wholesome adoption of Islam and inner renewal. Although the al Qaeda organization of bin Laden grew out of similar religious movement, its prime focus is not the domestic enemy or those fellow Muslim infidels from within the Community, but the external threat represented by the “Zionist-Crusader alliance.” In the interviews and fatwas of bin

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34 For a critique of Salafi traditionalism, see Aziz Al-Azmeh, Islams and Modernities (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 96-97.
Laden, one can easily see this change in radical Salafi tactics. In fact, the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York marked the beginning of a new phase of Islamist terrorism as it moved from internal arena of Muslim states to a global context under the banner of a pan-Islamic jihadi movement.

**Jihad in Islamic Traditions**

In the Islamic intellectual history, the fundamentalist ideology including that of radical Salafism has been marginal to and opposed by the mainstream Islamic thought. Contesting the radical interpretation of Islamic theology, the moderate Muslim intellectuals, for instance, insist that jihad essentially denotes a moral and spiritual quest rather than a military or terror campaign. Instructive in this connection is the claim by Khalil Abdel Alim of the American Muslim Mission that, “jihad does not mean fighting a war; it means struggle for what is required of one in obedience to God.”

Likewise, Akbar S. Ahmad contends, “It is the desire to improve oneself, to attempt betterment and to struggle for the good cause. It is Tennysonian in its scope: to strive, to seek and not to yield.”

The purpose of undertaking jihad, according to Fazlur Rahman, an eminent Islamic scholar “is to establish the Islamic socio-moral order.” The Quran, he adds, does not make jihad as ‘holy war’ an article of faith, a designation that is applicable to the five pillars of Islam. It was the fanatic Karijites (the plural of Khariji, which means seceder) of the early Islamic period who raised jihad to the level of a “sixth pillar” of the faith.

Although an increasing number of scholarly publications prefer the traditional medieval translation ‘holy war’, at a purely linguistic level jihad means ‘exertion’. In fact, neither in Qur’an nor in the Hadiths (the record of Muhammad’s sayings and actions) can one

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41 Rahman, *Islam*, n. 37, p. 37. A fanatic Shia faction, the Karijites had supported fourth Caliph Ali ibn-abi-Talib, Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law in the famous ‘Battle of Camel’ at Siffin in 657 against Prophet’s young widow Aisha and Muawiyah, the nephew of Ali’s predecessor, Uthman and powerful governor of Syria. But, disillusioned with Ali’s failure to punish Muawiyah, they assassinated him in Kufa in southern Iraq in 661. They justified their revolt against the Caliph by arguing that a leader who had transgressed Muslim precepts could be considered a non-Muslim. See Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization: The Age of Faith* (New York, 1950), pp. 191-192.
find such expression as holy war, which in Arabic would sound like *harb-al muqaddasah*.\(^{43}\)

Moreover, jihad constitutes only 0.4 per cent of the whole of Qur’an, whereas *hadiths* seem to suggest two aspects of jihad: spiritual striving and the fighting for Islam or the cause of Allah. The former is categorised by the Muslim scholars as the “greater jihad” (*al-jihad al-akbar*), the latter as the “lesser jihad” (*al-jihad al-asghar*), which is also known as the jihad of the sword (*jihad bi-al-saif*). The greater jihad has been further divided into “jihad of the heart”, “jihad of the tongue” and “jihad of the pen”, which together make the jihad a progressive achievement. Only when Islam is threatened and as a last resort, Muslims conduct the Jihad of the sword or the lesser jihad for defense.\(^{44}\)

Thus, from the perspective of the Islamic liberals, jihad is not obligatory upon all Muslims. Nor can it be declared by a single individual or groups claiming to defend the faith since the right to declare jihad belongs to the highest political authority, the Caliph (the head of the Community). It is further contended that in the second half of the 8\(^{th}\) century, the Arab conquests transformed the concept of jihad into a productive expansionist tool and exalted the duty of jihad in the Islamic traditions.\(^{45}\) The result was a doctrine in which jihad came to be equated with the ‘jihad of swords’ and was meant to be applied in the context of *Dar al-Islam* (Abode of Islam) and *Dar al-Harb* (Abode of War).\(^{46}\)

All the same, most historical examples have involved the use of jihad by such puritanical and revivalist groups as the *Kharijites* and the *Wahhabis* of the early 19\(^{th}\) century Arabia. If the members of the Kharijite sect were the first to turn the fury of their jihad against the established rule in pursuit of a transcendent and extreme idealism, the

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\(^{44}\) Ibid., pp. 21-23.


Wahhabi partisans carried on jihad against the “apostates” from within the Community.\textsuperscript{47} The former unleashed a series of terrorist acts that made life nasty, brutish, and short for many Muslims, while the latter destroyed everything that appeared to them to represent a deviation from authentic Islam, including the tombs in Medina. Not surprisingly, therefore, the \textit{Kharijite} revolt, as much the \textit{Wahhabi} legacy of religious zeal, remains an enduring source of inspiration for the present-day militant Islamists.\textsuperscript{48} Unlike these ultra-zealot puritans for whom jihad was meant primarily to rid the Community of moral laxity and apostasy, various Muslim reform movements active in other parts of the world, particularly South Asia, North Africa and Central Asia employed the institution of jihad to resist the against the encroachment of Western –imperial powers, Britain, France and Russia respectively. Indeed, jihad proved to be a potent technique of mass mobilisation for the liberation efforts of the secular-nationalist leadership during the latter part of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{49}

In all, Muslims have not shaped their contemporary idea of jihad only through the Qur’an and the Hadiths. The Islamic juridical traditions (\textit{fiqh}), the history of Ummah (Community of believers), the rise of powerful Muslim states like the Ottoman Empire and the instrumental function of Islam as an expression of protest against imperialism have played a vital role in the fundamental shifting of the meaning of jihad towards holy war.\textsuperscript{50} With the widespread Muslim reaffirmation of the duty of jihad, coupled with expressions of Muslim sympathy for al-Qa’ida, a local intra-Afghan conflict has been transformed into the pan-Islamic Jihadi movement under the banner of International Islamic Front for Jihad.


Characteristics

One of the most significant attributes of Islamic fundamentalism is its **pervasiveness.** The movement is a trans-national phenomenon; it has been occurring not only in the countries where Muslims are numerically dominant, but also among Islamic minorities in India, Philippines, China and even the Western countries. While its mass base is largely made up of the lower and lower middle classes, it enjoys greater level of support among the upper middle classes and upwardly-mobile groups. Second most striking aspect of the phenomenon is the **persistence** of tendency towards Islamic regeneration since the Western intrusion into the *Dar al-Islam* in the 18th century. “For the first time in history”, writes Brown, “Muslim societies and states confronted not just raw alien military superiority (as the Mongols and Tamerlane) and not just the broad challenge of alien civilization that seemed equally attractive and threatening to the true faith.”

It was instead a simultaneous military and civilizational challenge that brought a radical change in power relations between the West and the entire Muslim world. While the 1757 Battle of Plassey, for example, marked the beginning of the decline of Muslim rule in the Indian subcontinent, the powerful Ottoman Empire underwent a progressive territorial shrinkage since the signing of the 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk Kaynarja with the Tsarist Russia and the Safavid Empire in Iran had split asunder much before the onset of the European penetration the in early 19th century. The powerful impact of European encroachments and Westernisation produced a tripartite Islamic reaction: revivalist, reformist and radicalist.

The revivalist Islam of the 18th and 19th centuries - exemplified by the Wahhabi revolt in Central Arabia, the purification movements of Shah Wali Allah and his son Shah Abdul-Aziz in northern India, Sayyid Ahmad’s short-lived Imamate in north-western India, the Fara’idis movement of Bengal, the Padri movement in Sumatra, and the Sanusiyya order in Libya – conducted a purely internal dialogue, centred on the tenets

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and prescriptions of early Islam. Rather than responding to the external challenges, purging Islam of its medieval accretions and belief and practices borrowed from other religions (Hinduism, for instance) was the focus of these movements. In contrast, the reformist Islam, as articulated by the Iranian born Muslim thinker Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-97), his closest Egyptian disciple Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and the Indian aristocrat Sayyid Ahmad Khan emerged during the 19th century in the wake of the European supremacy and expansion. Prompted by the external stimuli, by the new Western-based order in ascendance, these modernist Muslim intellectuals directed their efforts to render Islam more applicable to changing environment. They asserted the need to revive the Muslim community through a process of a reinterpretation or reformulation of their Islamic heritage in the light of the contemporary world.

Unlike these liberal reformers who tried to modernise Islam to meet the changes and challenges triggered by the increasing Western hegemony, the radical Islamists of the 20th century such as Hassan al-Banna, and Qutb of Egypt and Maududi of Pakistan turned Islam into an instrument to resist the Western hegemony in the Muslim world. Even though Hassan al-Banna argued for gradual change from within the society, the Muslim Brotherhood he established had become a political force during the 1940s in Egypt involved in acts of violence against the British and in support of the Palestinians against the Zionists. Qutb called for jihad as the method of liberation and overthrow of power to establish the Islamic state, which together with his concept of martyrdom inspired many Islamist groups in West Asia and beyond. Likewise, Maududi referred jihad to “revolutionary struggle” aimed at wresting control of government from the non-believers and establishing “God’s just order in the world.” He rejected the modernist view of jihad

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53 Known in Arabic literature as the ‘Sage of the East’, Afghani was the first Muslim to realize clearly that the entire Muslim world, not just part of it, was threatened by the West, a powerful, dynamic entity; and the first to use the concepts ‘Islam’ and ‘the west’ as connoting correlative- and of course antagonistic-historical phenomena. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton, 1957), p. 49.


as merely defensive means while emphasizing the distinctiveness of Islam. For him, the modernists’ copying of the western-style progress reflected the “inferiority complex” and would lead to the cultural enslavement of Muslim World by the West. If Muslims were in disarray and vulnerable, it was, he forcefully argued, because of their departure from and non-abidance with Islam. The solution to the plight of Indian Muslims Maududi provided was the creation of a committed vanguard that would bring into existence a righteous community, a salih jama‘at.\(^{56}\) On the whole, the influence of these radical Muslim thinkers can be seen “in the two options- evolution of, a process which emphasizes revolutionary change from below, and revolution, the violent overthrow of established systems of government.”\(^{57}\)

Third major characteristic of Islamic fundamentalism is its polycentrism, which means the absence of a common centre or the core leadership. Even though the conditions in Islamic societies are largely similar and experiences common to them (the cultural enslavement by the West, or the hegemonic American policies, for instance) have contributed to the radicalisation of Islamist tendency, “the return to Islamic roots has a nativistic and localistic character; at least in part it developed in response to particular conditions existing in different national environments.”\(^{58}\) In fact, at the early stage of its development, the movement had no single leader charismatic enough to provide focus in terms of spiritual unity and revolutionary activity. Nor did it have any traditional repository of authority to serve as a symbolic focus as did the Sultan-Caliph Abdulhamid II towards the end of the 19th century leading the pan-Islamic movement. Even Ayatollah Khomeini of post-revolution Iran failed to rally Muslims as it was mainly confined to the Shi’ite Muslims who make up roughly 15 percent of world’s Muslim population.

In the later half of the 1990s, Osama bin–Laden was to an extent successful in building up a transnational Islamist movement by bringing together under the banner of International Islamic Front for jihad a diverse range of Islamist groups with the al-Qaeda


\(^{57}\) Esposito, The Islamic Threat, n.6, p. 129.

(the base) in Afghanistan as the nucleus. After the U.S.-led campaign in Afghanistan destroyed its centre of gravity, the al-Qaeda has become, as described by Bruce Hoffman, "an amorphous movement tenuously held together by a loosely networked transnational constituency rather than a monolithic, international terrorist organisation with either a defined or identifiable command or control apparatus... The result is that today there are many Al Qaedas rather than the single Al Qaeda of the past. It has become a vast enterprise-an international movement or franchise operation with like-minded local representatives, loosely connected to a central ideological or motivational base, but advancing their common goal independently of one another." 59 The phrase "many al-Qaedas" refers to the fact that al-Qaeda currently has become more an idea or concept than an organisation or a movement, as also argued by many other analysts. 60

Neo-fundamentalists

Some scholars are of the opinion that the current upsurge of fundamentalist movements in the Muslim world, which can be said to date from the early 1970s, presents a second order reaction. For, they are not so much a revolt against the modernisation, but an intense reaction to the failure on the part of the religious as well as political leaders to deal with these failures. In other words, the contemporary Islamists are not simply opposed to the secular-nationalists, who try to adapt Islam to national requirements, but challenge the authorities of the “establishment Islam”, the formal religious bodies, for their subservience to the state. They seek to transform the role of Islam in the polity by advocating an assertive and forceful political Islam. In brief, Islamic movements have grown as second generation movements not in the chronological sense of the term, but programmatically.


60 Their operational patterns may be transnational in the sense that they prefer to strike at international targets in their local battle zone or that they are willing to carry out terrorist attacks far outside their territorial base. Unlike the International Communist, they, however, do not have central leadership even though Bin Laden for some remains a symbol of a heroic figure. While some Islamist groups share al-Qaeda’s vision of global jihadism, others are deeply parochial and have their own agenda like fighting for state power or to secede from a larger political community. See Burke, Al-Qaeda, n. 60; Salwa Ismail, “The Paradox of Islamist Politics”, Middle East Report, No. 221 (Winter 2003), pp. 34-36;
Oliver Roy has characterised the contemporary fundamentalist leaders as "neo-fundamentalists", who in contrast to the earlier generation of leaders are more populist activists than religious scholars. "Militants who were previously striving for the Islamic revolution", according to Roy, "are becoming involved in a process of re-Islamisation from below; they preach an individual return to the practices of Islam and, with their pro-sharia campaign, resemble the traditional fundamentalist mullahs from whom they are now distinguished only by their intellectual origins, professional insertion in modern society, and involvement in politics."61 The populist theme of the "return to Islam" is still just as powerful a motivator. It is more socio-educational than political; while playing the card of political integration. "This neo-fundamentalism works its way deeply into the society before questioning the state."62 When conditions permit, they advance under their own banner onto the political scene, forming parties and running for office unlike the strictly fundamentalist or quietist movements such as the associations of ulamas or the Tablighi Jamaat. Inspired by a pietistic movement born in South Asia in 1927, the Jama'at al-tabligh (Society for the Propagation of Islam) set in motion a programme of literal imitation of the example of the Prophet Muhammad in order to preserve and spread an Islamic identity in an area overwhelmingly dominated by the Hindus. The preaching of tabligh played an instrumental role in creating homogenous and exemplary communities resistant to any integration that would force Muslims to compromise with the most rigorous forms of Islam in the totality of its meaning.63

Since the mid-1980s, there has been an observable drift of political Islamism towards a neo-fundamentalism in part because of the receding appeal of the Iranian model and in greater part, the twin state policy of containment and co-optation of the Islamists in Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. While conservative countries like Saudi Arabia tried to control the Islamist networks through generous funding, others adopted greater governmental adherence of Islamic law in an attempt to either neutralise

62 Ibid., p. 76.
63 For further insights into this movement, see Rahman, Islam, n. 37, pp. 109-124; Kepel, Muslim Extremism, n.19, pp. 16-17; Choueiri, Islamic Fundamentalism, n.53, pp. 69-78.
the leftist challenge or undermine the credibility of the Islamist opponents.\textsuperscript{64} All this, according to Roy, accounted for the retreat of political Islamism accompanied by the ascendancy of Islam as a social phenomenon. "If the Islamic society is above all based on the virtue of its members, then individuals and practices must be reformed. The spread of this Islamisation will necessarily lead to an Islamic polity."\textsuperscript{65} "Re-Islamisation" at the grassroots level takes place along two axes: individual reform through preaching and the establishment of Islamised spaces, either in purely spatial terms (cities; neighbourhoods) or in terms of practical considerations and networks (Islamic banks and self-help societies). The Islamised spaces are replete with mutual help networks that aim at both founding of the "Islamic personality" and meeting societal needs, which the state has long neglected. Once such "Islamised spaces," the equivalent of the "liberated zones" of the liberation movements of yesteryear, are established, neo-fundamentalists endeavour to force the state to confirm its existence, with the idea of later spreading the principles on which it is founded to the whole of society.\textsuperscript{66}

Contesting, however, the analytical distinction made by Oliver Roy and Gilles Kepel between a revolutionary Islamisation from above and social Islamisation from below in the Muslim world, Francosis Burgat holds that there has been an almost constant coexistence of the two. "The hypothesis of an initial revolutionary tendency that towards the end of the 1980s reappeared from below", he argues, "supposes that the movements of re-Islamisation from above of the 1960s and 1970s appeared from nowhere, and no religious or social mobilization had previously occurred in the area."\textsuperscript{67} Contrarily, the tactic of Islamisation from below adopted by the fundamentalists has helped them sustain their struggle whether it is pitted against external enemy (Israel in case of the Hamas and Hezbollah) or against authoritarian regime (the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria and Jihad Organization and Islamic Jama'a in Egypt), or directed at establishing rule in conformity with the sunna (Pakistan's Jamiat – Ulema –i-Islam and

\textsuperscript{65} Roy, The Failure, n. 61, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., pp. 81-82.
\textsuperscript{67} Burgat, Face to Face, n. 23, p. 54.
Stressing the bedrock theme of “Islam is the solution”, the Islamists have forged close links with the community through networks of educational institutions, consumer cooperatives and study circles. The large, organised social base that they have created over the years would not easily succumb to external blows, military or political. The pacifist Tablighi Jamaat, for example, became the precursor of revolutionary Islamism even though its preaching had focused on individual conversions and puritanism. Similarly, many contemporary Islamist factions believe that Islamisation of society is the essential pre-condition of the cultural and political emancipation from what Ali Shari’ati, the leading theoretician of the Iranian Islamic revolution, calls “westoxification”, which, like pestilence, kills the heart of Islamic society.68

Moreover, popular Islam provides the populace with a frame of identity and spiritual medium of escape from alienation, what Bassam Tibi calls “the cultural anomie.”69 It is characterised by a heightened sense of socio-spiritual religious commitment, more rigorous observance of Islamic practices and a general sense of Muslim fraternity. Although popular Islam is generally passive in political sense, it could become radicalized during the periods of external or internal crisis.70 All this explains why social action continues to be an important field of activity for the Islamists.

**Strategies and Goals**

As noted, fundamentalist Islam has diverse manifestations, elements or components, and contextual historical and societal conditions. It is a multifarious movement with no “Comintern” to serve as an overall command imposing a unified structure and coherent ideology. Although the current wave of Islamic resurgence is marked by the proliferation of Islamist groups, their programmes, strategies and tactics

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vary among and within countries. "For all the appearance of a single", writes Halliday, "pan-Islamic current, and the reality of co-operation and inspiration linking these movements, the Islamists varied considerably between countries, depending on the religious, political and social character of each." In brief, politicised Islam is not a monolith; its spectrum is broad.

Despite this multiplicity and the particularist properties of each Islamist group, they share some ideological themes that are heavily influenced by the fundamentalist theoretical constructs provided by such prominent Muslim thinkers and activist as Maududi, Sayyid Qutb and Ayatollah Khomeini. First of all, fundamentalists view Islam more than a ‘religion’ as in Western secular sense or the mystical interpretation of the Sufis. The faith must be the complete way of life with no separation from *aquida wa Shar‘iah* (belief and law), *din wa-daulah* (spiritual and temporal) and *din wa-dunya* (religion and world). In short, Muslims look towards the Islamic ideology as more than a code governing moral conduct; it instead is a comprehensive corpus of rules and guidelines that address to people’s deeds and requirements. Seen from this overarching perspective, the faith has been increasingly seen capable of guiding the adherents in all situations and circumstances provided they are committed to following its teachings.

Second, fundamentalists believe that departure from and non-abidance with Islam since its encounter with modernity has led to steady regression and decline of Muslim peoples. They advocate adherence to the original beliefs of the religion in their literal interpretations as fundamental and basic principles, transcending all social, economic, political, and cultural transformations which span a period of 14 centuries. Thus the fundamentalist call for "the return to Islam" has for over three decades incited political involvement and direct action across the Muslim world to bring about the re-Islamisation of the society and the establishment of *nizam Islami* (Islamic order) in the world modeled on the Medinian caliphate. Most radical activists still look to the so-called golden age of the four caliphs for inspiration and for guidance on the implementation of an ‘authentic’

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and uniquely Islamic form of popular government. While the radical Islamists' insistence on a return to the golden age is a reflection of the desire to emulate the pure practices of that era, it is also as much the outcome of a strategy which intends to place political power in the hands of the religious community. Thus, the 'ulama' under such circumstances come to represent a new (and largely immovable) political class, and one which, by virtue of being deeply tied to the traditions of Islam, enjoy legitimacy for their authority to interpret Islam. Examples now abound in the Muslim world of the ulama using their spiritual authority for political gain. In Iran and Sudan they have done so quite openly, as also in Afghanistan under the Taliban. Afghanistan’s Taliban leaders who used their control of Afghanistan in the second half of the 1990s to reject the modern state in its entirely and tie the country’s fortunes to the promised land, the myth of a new Islamic caliphate.

Third, fundamentalists are united in opposition to modernity partly because it is a legacy of Western colonialism and imperialism. What is more, the fundamentalists find the social modernisation and secularism in particular inimical to Islam, a belief system deemed superior to Western materialism. Ironically, however, the fundamentalists are themselves nothing but a response to modernity. “The identity of fundamentalism”, as Bruce Lawrence has pointed out, “as both a psychological mindset and a historical movement, is shaped by the modern world. Fundamentalists -- are at once the consequence of modernity and the antithesis of modernism.” Fourth, for fundamentalists, Western democracy is alien to Islam because the Islamic polity is based on hakimiyya, or divine sovereignty over all creation. In practice this means the supremacy of the shari’a, God’s laws, which no person or group can alter or nullify. Thus, all other forms of human governance, such as Western democracy based on majoritarian principles would negate God’s authority and command creating conditions comparable to the Jahiliyya of pre-Islamic Arabia. Underlining this basic contradiction, Bernard Lewis has claimed that “Islam is incompatible with liberal democracy as the

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75 Lawrence, Defenders of God, n. 1, p. 84.
fundamentalists themselves would be first to say: they regard liberal democracy with contempt as a corrupt and corrupting form of government."\(^{76}\)

Lastly, the core objective of political Islam has changed and changed fundamentally. During the de-colonization phase, Islam, for instance, was used functionally to reach certain goals, which were not immediately derived from Islam itself, and sometimes had nothing to do with it. Islam no longer serves the instrumental function either as a regime challenging (Egypt and Algeria) or regime legitimising ideology (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan and Sudan).\(^{77}\) Nor is it simply a rejection of modernity or a revolt against the universality of Western norms and values. It instead seeks to establish an alternative global order based on the idea of *hakimiyyat Allah* (God's rule).\(^{78}\) The fundamentalists' assumptions that the future belongs to Islam are predicated on the belief that the moral bankruptcy within the Western civilization would soon precipitate its collapse and Islam by virtue of its superior capacity and noblest system would lead the whole of humanity.\(^{79}\) In pursuit of this fundamentalist utopia, which in any case entails the risk of confrontation with the Christian West, acts of violence acquire legitimacy. For, jihad becomes a holy struggle between believers and non-believers and its enemies become *satanised*, so much so that it forecloses the options for negotiations and compromises.

**Causation: Culturalist and Contingencist Approaches**

Islamic fundamentalism is a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon, which cannot be explained by single factor or sets of factors. Explanation and analysis provided by various scholars and researchers could be broadly divided into two main approaches:

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78 For a discussion of the struggle between the West and Islam over who will provide the definition to the post-Cold War world order, see John Kelsay, *Islam and War: The Gulf War and Beyond* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), Chap. 5.


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cultural essentialist and the contingencist. The main focus of the former is the Islamic exceptionalism, whereas the latter rejects any universal framework and concentrates on the 'contingent' realities (the socio-political situation) that exist in each Islamic country. The adherents of the first include both proponents of true Islam and those in the West known as the 'orientalists' who view the Islamic world essentially different from the rest of the world, in general, and the West, in particular. The essentialists are those who argue that the Islamic world is dominated by a set of relatively enduring and unchanging processes and meaning to be understood through the texts of Islam and language it generates.\(^8\) They, for instance, attribute the current wave of Islamic fundamentalism to Islam's inability to adapt to the modern age, which has left Muslim societies ill prepared and ill equipped to meet the challenges of globalization on their own.\(^8\) According to Myron Weiner, "What is striking about Islamic resurgence is its rejection of much of what is generally regarded as modern in the 19\(^{th}\) century: secularism, democracy and even nationalism. In this respect, Islam has come to play quite a different role from that of the religions of modernization –Christianity, Judaism, Confucianism, Shintoism, even Buddhism and Hinduism. Each of these religions, in its own way, has been interpreted or reinterpreted so as to induce people to modernization, or to function alongside of, without impeding, modern behaviour, yet to provide personal comfort, a sense of continuity with one's past, and group identity."

Central to the culturalist approach is, however, the argument that in comparison with other major religions of the world, Islam is a political religion per excellence. It has from the very beginning united and governed the community of believers as a political religion. Unlike the founder of Christianity, who was crucified and whose followers saw their religion made the official faith of the Roman Empire only after centuries as a persecuted minority, Prophet Mohammed founded a state during his lifetime, and as ruler he collected taxes, dispensed justice, promulgated laws, commanded armies, and made

\(^8\) Halliday, "Review Article", n. 71, pp. 400-401.

\(^8\) See Bernard Lewis, What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response (London: Phoenix, 2002).

war and peace. In fact, Muhammad was as much of a political leader as a Prophet, and his new "religious association had long been conceived of as a community organised on political lines, not as a church within a secular state."^83 The Christian era, for instance, begins with Christ's birth, whereas the Muslim era starts with the year when Muhammad and his followers achieved political power by establishing the Muslim community in Medina. ^84

Historically, from the famous War of Camels at Khoraiba in southern Iraq through the killing of Ali by the fanatic Kharijites (seceders) near Kufa to the rise of ultra-conservative Wahhabism in the 19th century and Bin-Laden's fatwas, it is the political component of Islam that has rendered it prone to violence. Consequently, jihad raised to the level of a "sixth pillar" of the faith has become an instrument to confront the Christian West in a bid to establish the hakimiyya, or divine sovereignty over all creation. Tracing the roots of the contemporary wave of politicized Islam, Charles Butterworth has noted:

Whether we look back to the community founded by the Prophet Muhammad while he was in Medina (622-30) or the way it was continued during the two years after he returned to Mecca, whether we think about the tradition of the four guided Caliphs (632-61) – the first successors to Muhammad- or about the Caliphs who guided the Umayyad 9661-750), Abbasid (750-1258), and Spanish Umayyad (756-1031) empires, or whether we consider the princes and commanders who ruled the Arab and Berber dynasties in Spain and North Africa (1031-1492) and the Sultans who ruled the Ottoman empire (1453-1918), we see political rule linked with religion. ^85

In his study on religion and political development, Donald Smith argues that the relationship between the religion and the political institutions in a society is not only determined by the specific configuration of historical circumstances but is also dependent on the extent to which the theology and organisation of particular religion encourages its involvement in political activity. Accordingly, Smith has classified major religions of the world into two distinct categories based on both structural as well as theological

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^84 Wilfred Cantwell Smith makes this interesting comparison in his *Islam in Modern History*, n. 54, p. 23.

differences: church and organic religions; historical and ahistorical religions. Islam fits into the category of "Organic religions", in part because of the absence of an autonomous religious organisation. More importantly, religious and political functions - what is God's and what is Caesar's - are not differentiated in the organic religions. "God and Caesar, church and state, spiritual and temporal authority have been a prevailing dualism in Western culture." In contrast, Huntington has contended, "In Islam God is Caesar." It is this fusion of religious and secular authorities that has turned Islam not merely a political religion, but also produces a political culture that can neither accommodate pluralism nor tolerate dissent. "Islamic civilization" according to Bernard Lewis, "has produced a wealth of theological, philosophical, and juridical literature on virtually every aspect of the state, its powers, and its functions. What is not discussed to any great extent is the difference between religious and temporal powers. The words for 'secular' and 'secularism' in modern Islamic languages are either loanwords or neologisms."

Thus, the only way that secularism can be kept alive in the Islamic world is by local Muslim dictatorship, supported by Western powers. Many Islamists already view the democratisation as a ploy to weaken Islam, just as the intrusion of Western materialism together with the modern nationalism and secularism has caused the degeneration of Islam today. For the fundamentalists, nationalist particularism is the negation of Islamic universalism and inhibits the unity of the *Umma*. Interestingly, even those Islamists who have been able to take advantage of pluralistic structures in various Muslim countries to gain access to levers of power are averse to diversity of political opinion. Their devotion to democratic principles can be expressed by the aphorism: "One man, one vote, one time." In brief, it is argued that if democracy deficit in the Muslim societies accounts for the exponential growth of religious fundamentalism, it has its roots in Islam's fusion of divine revelation and state power.

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88 Quoted in Ibid., p. 62.
89 M. Steven Fish, "Islam and Authoritarianism", *World Politics*, Vo. 55 (October 2002). pp. 4-35.
The prevalence of autocracies, according to the culturalists, is the product of the dominant political tradition of command and obedience. According to Bernard Lewis, one of the most prominent proponents of this view, medieval Islamic jurists, seeking to stave off the periodic revolts which marred early Islamic history (or, more plausibly, please the sultans at whose whim they served), decreed that obedience to political rulers, even unjust ones, was a religious duty - hence the famous admonition of Al-Ghazali: "Better one hundred years of the Sultan's tyranny than one year of the people's tyranny over each other." As a result, writes Bernard Lewis, "the political experience of the Middle East under the caliphs and sultans was one of almost unrelieved autocracy, in which obedience to the sovereign was a religious as well as a political obligation, and disobedience a sin as well as a crime." 90

Because Muslims often consider the early traditions of Islam to be part of the original message of revelation, they typically look to the way Muslims lived in the past rather than attempt to construct new ways based on both the original teachings of Islam and the realities of modern life. Although the meaning of Islam cannot be limited to the perceptions of Muslims or equated with their practices, neither can it be understood separately from these perceptions and practices.91 As a result of this political tradition, quietism is said to have become more or less an article of faith in Islam. The Muslim, according to G. E. von Grunebaum, "deeply feels man's insignificance . . . and the omnipotence of the uncontrollable power above him," and is therefore "more readily prepared than the Westerner to accept the accomplished fact."92 The absence of institutionalised channels of political participation always makes it easier for underground radical movements to gain support from disaffected sectors of the populations. Oppression by secular authoritarian regimes naturally enhances the attractiveness of untried Islamist rule as an alternative.

After all, Islam, unlike Buddhism is, for instance, a historical religion, wherein history is viewed as divinely ordained. As Smith has contended, history is important for

revealed religions, particularly Islam, because human institutions and relationship both within the community and outside have theological significance. Nothing better illustrates this concern with history than the adoption of A.D. 622, which is the year of Prophet Muhammad’s Hijra from Mecca to Medina, as the beginning of the Muslim calendar. With the onset of the Western domination of the Islamic world in the 18th century, Islam has faced a serious spiritual crisis so eloquently described by Wilfred Cantwell Smith:

The fundamental malaise of modern Islam is a sense that something has gone wrong with Islamic history. The fundamental problem of modern Muslims is how to reestablish that history: to set it going in full vigour, so that Islamic society may once again flourish as a divinely guided society should and must. 93

The nature of Islam as an “historical” and an “organic” religion makes it politically salient to be used either as a regime-challenging instrument or as regime-legitimising ideology in the authoritarian states. In other words, Islam is simply the vehicle and coinage of the struggle between the state and its challengers. In countries ruled by military junta such as Pakistan under Zia Ul-Haq and Bangladesh under Zia ur-Rehman in the early 1980s, Islam serves the instrumental function as the purveyor of legitimacy, while in the oil-rich Arab countries it represents the higher idea of state or the constitutive element of state identity. The oil boom of the 1970s was more than simply a politically pacifying factor (through distribution of revenues to appease larger sections of population) for the conservative Gulf monarchies; it provided the ground for constructing a new ideology to counteract the intrusive Pan-Arabism. Labelled as “petro-islam”, it derives from the premise that “it is not merely an accident that oil is concentrated on the thinly populated Arabian countries rather than in the densely populated Nile Valley or Fertile Crescent, and that this apparent irony of fate is indeed a grace and a blessing from God that should be solemnly acknowledged and lived up to.” 94 An important ideological function of petro-Islam was to promote Muslim universalism, a safer doctrine than the geographically more limited but politically more troublesome idea of Pan-Arabism. It was in pursuit of this ideal that the leading Gulf States directed a substantial portion of

93 Smith, Islam, n. 54, p. 47.
their bilateral and multilateral aid towards the non-Arab states with large Muslim population through internal charity organisations, notably the *Rabita-e-Alam-e-Islami*, and trans-national bodies like the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).95

**Contigencist Factors**

The Culturalist arguments are intellectually constrained by the old orientalist arguments that freeze cultures into unchanging essences; they also disconnect Muslims from their larger Third World global contexts.96 The mass appeal of Islamism as an ideology has its roots in secular circumstances even though they have been given a religious expression. Islamic fundamentalism is not a single idea; it has been articulated in response to historical phenomena as diverse as colonialism, the creation of nation-states, the process of modernization and Western political and economic hegemony.97 It is thus a product of a combination of endogenous and exogenous factors. The first refers to the symptoms of the society in crisis (gross mal-distribution of political power, culture of corruption, mass unemployment, and chaotic urbanization). The second is related to the developments outside, notably the process of globalisation and Western politico-cultural penetration spawning deep sense of alienation or marginalisation. Lacking political legitimacy, the ruling elite in many Muslim countries tends to deploy Islamic symbols and themes either for the purpose of legitimation or to discredit those hostile to the regime. Ultimately, the failure of modernisation policies has underscored the bankruptcy of the alien schemes and turned Muslims inward in search of indigenous ways of life and governance.98 Despite all the modern ideologies that have been tried and found wanting, Islam remains the source of cultural authenticity and national identity for most Muslims.


Without question, the pervasiveness of the Islamic cultural fiber in the life of Muslims makes it an integral part of their national-self definitions. In fact, the ideologies of nationalism, socialism and socialism imported from the 19th century Europe never penetrated the deeper instincts of the Muslim masses. On the contrary, the process of modernisation initiated by the acculturated nationalist elite in post-independence years was seen as synonymous with de-Islamisation. By jettisoning institutions deemed as “pre-modern” or potentially “anti-modern” even if they were part of the fabric of social identity, the nationalist elites tried to construct a new identity in which the religious discourse was increasingly disarticulated from hegemonic institutions. According to a critic, it increasingly “shifted towards the popular field formulating another oppositional narrative: an Islamic discourse which constructed Westernist/modernist acts and interventions and reforms by state as the symbol of a loss of faith and authenticity.”

Central to this oppositional discourse is that Islamism is not a counterculture; it is a reaffirmation of an existing old culture.

The ascendancy of the West represents a cultural-ideological invasion, or a new imperialism, which only Islam can combat. In the face of this onslaught, the fundamentalists stand fast against “cultural surrender” and “identity betrayal.”

As aptly pointed out by Farncois Burgat,

"The sound of 'Praise be to God' rising from the mosques reflects not only ejection of the West, but also of the elites which are 'secular', which, according to Islamist logic, means hostility to the endogenous normative and symbolic system and, should the claim fit, corrupt and despotic, accused of prolonging the domination of the West."

In any case, the post-independence leadership, secular or otherwise, failed to deliver on their promises of national strength, socio-economic development and political freedom. Instead, they spawned authoritarian, repressive structure that stifled civil society, thwarted individual initiatives and nurtured bureaucratic inertia that resulted in undermining the regime legitimacy and widening the state-society gulf.

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101 Burgat, Face to Face, n. 23, p. 52.
The hold of Islam on the masses gives the Islamic movement a natural advantage over all other ideologies. It enables the movement to capture the people’s imagination, to inspire them, and to mobilise them for political action. To that end, the mosque and its affiliate bodies (Qur’anic schools, religious study groups, and charitable foundations) and the independent network of Islamic educational, social welfare, and medical services furnish the organisational support in the battle for the people’s hearts and minds. Islamic groups have built and utilised these institutions as alternative to inadequate of inefficient government services to enhance their position with the masses. Indeed, the proliferation of independent local mosques with independent preachers has provided effective platforms of dissent outside government control. Many of the Islamic movements do have as their foundation neighborhood in mosques or Islamic study circles. It is clear that in this ideological-political arena, which is currently devoid of optimism, Islam holds out the prospect of salvation and diminished despair. The hope thus engendered has acquired political meaning, and some are taking direct action to work out the Islamic principles.

In a way, today’s Islamic fundamentalism is a continuation of the postcolonial, anti-Western nationalist struggle, but now couched in the language of radical Islam and in a new form, it is the reincarnation of the nationalist movement with an Islamic face. In many respects, the Islamists espouse the nationalist’s agenda—independence, national strength, social justice, and authenticity—but express it with a religious cast. No wonder that the Islamic activists have championed the struggle for “decolonisation at the cultural level - part and parcel of anti-Western Third Worldism - and advocated a revival of a pristine Islamic identity and culture. Actually, their movement has a worldview and an understanding of the global political system similar to those of other; Third World nationalist ideologies and movements. An essential element of Islamic fundamentalism today is its assertion that it is crowning the struggle against colonialism by eradicating its most pervasive vestige: Western cultural hegemony, the chief source of their countries failings. Islam, then, has taken on the character of a quasi-national liberation doctrine. This puts the Westernised elites, who are looked upon as transplanted Westerners, in the

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102 Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, n. 53, p. 61. The question of identity is not something new as it commenced with the inception of European colonialism in the nineteenth century. It became the rallying cry of Third World independence movements in the first half of the twentieth century. In the world of Islam, the historical encounter with the West prompted an Islamic self-definition opposite to the Western.
enemy camp." In fact, the Islamic discourse has become so pervasive that even secular Muslim nationalists have invoked Islamist themes such as *jihad* (holy war) and *iman* (faith) in the struggle against the Western powers. But the use of religious idioms by nationalists should not be surprising; there has always been a strain of religious fervor in the many strands of political discourse in the entire Muslim world.

Above all, Islamic fundamentalism is more a response to economic conditions than a desire to build a theocracy. The fact that it has flourished since the 1980s is an indication of the parallel socioeconomic crises in many Muslim-dominated countries, crises that exemplify for their victims the failure of modernisation. One such component of modernisation, education, turned out not to be the key to opportunities in the context of limited economics. The spread of education only swelled the ranks of unemployed and underemployed graduates in economies that offered few opening outside the bloated public sector. The waves of educated young people flooding into a saturated job market every year face a bleak present and an even bleaker future. Another component of modernisation, urbanisation, was fueled by spiraling population growth and rural migration. The deterioration and suffocation of urban life were inevitable. Further, the pull of the city for deprived millions in the countryside created "ruralised" enclaves within city confines, changing the nature of cohesion and collectivity in many ways. One way was to transfuse village religious tradition and conservative ethos into the new setting. Cities now are mega-centers with few of their former positive cosmopolitan characteristics. But most distressing and dangerous are the immense and inexorably growing pools of angry surplus labor, and desperate people trying to extract an existence from nothingness. The masses of the migrant poor are kept "out" economically and politically. Their despondence, uprootedness, alienation, and traditional conservatism make for almost total susceptibility to the radical Islamic appeal. The fundamentalists translate their grievances, frustrations, and aspirations into language that is intelligible to them: the language of Islam.  

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Another component of modernisation, economic growth, especially during the oil boom of the 1970s, had induced structural imbalances and economic disequilibrium: a burgeoning public sector and increasing disparities in wealth. Most of the growth has been in the service sector of the economy, especially government services, and consumer-related industries. This has worked to the detriment of agricultural and industrial expansion, which has lagged behind in most Arab countries. Equally consequential, the political and social structures in most of these counties along with the expanding population are not conducive to a more equitable distribution of income. Rather, the gulf between the beneficiaries of grow, the few, and those who are left out, the many, has grown ever wider, making for a greater polarization of the societies. In the end, rising expectations that accompanied the onset of modernisation have been crushed by harsh socioeconomic realities leading to what has been dubbed by critics as a "lost generation." Caught between an uncertain future and the lure of the past, they constitute a chief recruitment pool for the Islamic movements. The swelling legions of malcontents among the young educated members of the middle and lower-middle classes have joined forces with the impoverished masses. The Islamic activists took up the cause of the poor and those with no "connections," articulating their demands. The lure of Islamism will persist so long as there exists the visible reasons for disquietude and chances are that the fundamentalists will press on with the injection of their moral vision into the world's business for it is implicit in their conception of Islam as a just, moral order that they carry on the struggle.

All of the above factors have stimulated the proliferation of Islamic fundamentalism. That Islamists have become assertive in Muslim countries as varied as Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan and Bangladesh shows how pervasive their activism has become in political life. The psychological distance between the elite and the masses tends to create on unhealthy tend in politics and the social structure. The elites subscribed to the above mentioned views while the masses remain distant from them and susceptible to religious sloganeering, appeal to religious symbols and

leadership in the periphery. Although Islamic radicalism emerged as a reaction against colonialism, it gained momentum in the early 1970s partly due to the failure of the secular nationalist governments to measure up to the popular expectations and in greater part, the external set-backs, notably the Arab defeat in the 1967 June War against Israel and Pakistani defeat in 1971 war. Consequently, “Islamist movements are stronger not in traditional Islamic states like those of the Arabian Peninsula but in countries that have been disillusioned with westernised governments.”

In some ways, Islamic radicalism as a modern political movement has more in common with other non-Islamic movements than with the Islamic intellectual traditions of the past. The socio-economic dislocations created by the process of modernisation generated a degree of discontent that was manifested in Islamic radicalism. However, the intensity and efficacy of such radicalism has depended on material and institutional capabilities of individual states. This is what in precise explains why the Islamist militancy poses a greater threat in countries like Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Pakistan and Bangladesh than in Jordan Morocco, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The masses, feeling threatened by the march of international capitalism and westernisation of their cultures and ways of life, feel exposed and, in response, criticise their own leaders for failing to deliver on their promises, attack them for their lack of accountability and transparency and for failing to follow the true teachings of Islam as the best way of protecting Muslims against their western neo-colonial enemies led by the United States (the ‘Great Satan’). In this context, Islam is for some the liberator, for not only does it show the way of the struggle against the ‘infidels’ but it also points to a way of reconstructing Muslim societies. Islam is seen as the solution for many of the problems besetting the Muslim world and also as the means of liberation from centuries of subservience.

The Green Peril

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, pundits and policymakers touted fundamentalism—the Islamic “Green Peril”—as the principal threat to the so-called new

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world order. Contrary to the western fear of an Islamic threat, Francis Fukiyama has described the Islamic resurgence as a passing phase which would loose the popularity if and when liberal democracy strikes roots in the Muslim societies.\textsuperscript{108} Introduction of democratic traditions would broaden the popular participation which would satisfy the political aspiration of the Islamists. Secondly, in the democratic selections if the Islamists come to power it would be difficult for them to provide as alternative socio-economic model to redress the popular grievances. This is glaringly evident in countries like Iran and Sudan, because the Islamists do not have a socio-economic blue-print. As Oliver Roy's study has revealed that in contrast to the earlier generation of leadership, the new leaders are political opportunists. They lack miserably any coherent view as regards the issue of re-organising society in the late 20th century; leave alone an alternative economic model, as a substitute to full market economy. He has also noted that Islamic movements have been taken over by a group of frustrated, half-educated youth who Roy has described as "lumpen-intellegensia", the activity of whom is now evident in the assassination of secular intellectuals and the violence against women.\textsuperscript{109}

The increasing numbers of Islamists who adhere to a modern interpretation of Islam form a loose-knit group with little chance of making an impact in the short term. The long term is a different matter, however. Given time, these Islamists could become a stabilising and constructive force with great capacities for developing public institutions and modernizing Muslim societies. Although liberal Islamists are part of the mainstream of the Islamic movement, their presence has not yet been institutionalised. They receive neither support from governments nor endorsement from the traditional or radical political groups. Traditionalists see them as "Westernised," radicals see them as "compromised," and authoritarian rulers see them as "dangerous."\textsuperscript{110}

Islamic fundamentalism, according to Graham Fuller "is historically inevitable, but politically tenable." Elaborating on this, he optimistically holds the view that opening up of the political system would prove to be more effective than suppressing and

\textsuperscript{109} Roy, \textit{The Failure}, n. 61, pp. 34-36.
containing Islamic fundamentalists. For suppression, he notes “generally serves to strengthen the radicalism of Islamist and to increase their appeal to oppressed citizenry.” Thus the issue here is not limiting the idea or political expression of Islam per se but containing and eliminating the Islamic extremism in Muslim societies. In the long run, Fuller adds, the Islamic fundamentalism even represents ultimate political progress towards greater democracy and popular government. To counter the Islamic threat the existing political regime should concentrate on democratising society. For the real democracy to take roots, there has to be a cordial relation between a state and civil society. The maturation of civil society would provide strength to democracy by resisting the state’s attempt to encroach on issue of human rights, oppression of dissidents and freedom of expression. Civil society would encourage the tolerance and respect for diversity or what is called the pluralism.

True, democracy will open the political process providing the Islamists with a new avenue through which they would pursue their political agenda. It is also true that democratisation in Muslim countries would sow the seeds of its own demise by giving the fundamentalists the handle to monopolise the political discourse and possibly take over power. As a result, the fear of Islamists’ electoral success has led to ambivalent responses to Muslim societies’ experiment with political pluralism. Policy-makers and academicians have either ignored the popular aspirations or tacitly approved the state crack-downs and even military coups. However, democracy may prove to be far more resilient than the challenge the Islamists pose to the state. Democracy instead could be the best means of containing the Islamist challenge.

At a closer examination, the Jammat-i-Islami of Pakistan is, for instance, far less threatening than its rhetoric, which calls for an Islamic revolution and creation of an Islamic state in Pakistan. Participation in political process can do more to tame the Islamist threat than the state repression. Exclusion is likely to radicalise it, reproducing the experience of the Iranian revolution, whereas participation is likely to constrict the

111 Graham. E. Fuller, Islamic fundamentalism in Northern Tier Countries: An Integrative View (Rand research study, 1991), pp. 41,42.
growth of the Islamist forces in Muslim societies.\textsuperscript{112} Ironically, the opponents try to divert public attention through state-sponsored Islamisation, which creates conditions conducive to the surge of Islamic militancy and jihadi terrorism, as in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Where the Islamists have failed to capture state power, their focus has shifted to the public life of individual Muslims to bring about the re-Islamisation from below. The process is facilitated by the fact that Islam at the level of masses provides a frame of reference for their collective identity and a symbol of self assertion.

In summation, Islamic fundamentalism is not homogeneous, since it is not like the communist movement fighting a common global issue. It is a multifarious movement with diverse manifestations, components, and contextual historical and social conditions. Even the programmes, strategies and tactics of Islam groups vary among and within countries, as do their sometimes contending ideologies. The phenomenon, therefore, has to be studied in the specific context of the process of social change and social structures in relation to the changing external milieu. Regardless of their particularistic properties, all Islamist groups share some common denominators as they draw on key assumptions of themes such as the need for liberating mankind from the state of Godless jahiliyya and establishment of an Islamic order for the actualisation of Muslim life. Whether it is the decrees of fugitive Saudi financier Osma bin Laden or political agenda of the Pakistani Jamaat-i-Islami and its counterpart in Bangladesh, all point to identical goals and unity of purpose though they differ on strategies. Despite their cultural-linguistic differences, Islamists in Pakistan and Bangladesh have identity of views on issues. Besides, Islam has also served in both countries the instrumental function for legitimation as well as consolidation of military regime apart from promoting nationalist sentiments vis-à-vis India.

Yet another important characteristic that the fundamentalist movements share in all Muslim countries is their identical social base for recruitment: the lower middleclass comprising mainly the petty traders, the school teachers and the shopkeepers, whether it is in Pakistan or Bangladesh, they are the most fervent supporters of fundamentalist

movements. Furthermore, the fundamentalist organisations aided by the “petro-dollars” from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States in the wake of the oil boom established an impressive social infrastructure, which help them in offering a political alternative.\textsuperscript{113} The Jamaat-I-Islami of Bangladesh has, for instance, launched a good number of private schools, hospitals, publishing firms, socio cultural organisations and various other non-profit welfare societies. More than half of the finances from Saudi Arabia have been directed to produce a new generation who would be the flag-bears of Wahhabi fundamentalism.

In Pakistan, likewise, the roots of Islamist extremism lie in the radical interpretation of theology promoted by and circulated through educational net-works supervised by the clergy. Over thirty thousand Islamic madrassas (religious seminaries) in Pakistan continued to preach a narrow and violent version of Islam, and many of them in the course of a protracted intra-Afghan war became the supply-line for jihad. Regardless of whether the fundamentalists fight elections or boycott them, accept the democratic system or reject it, they remain a force to reckon with both in politics and society. Role of Islam, however, varies depending on the nature of the society, the structure of the polity and more importantly, their diverse experience in the historical process of state formation.

With a broader overview of the phenomenon in the backdrop, this study sets out to examine the factors that have contributed in varying degrees to the fundamentalist upsurge in Pakistan and Bangladesh, and its socio-political implications. Apart from addressing such critical issues as the causal connection between the crisis of legitimacy and the rise of political Islam, and the function of regional and global developments in facilitating Islamic fundamentalism, the study also makes an attempt to highlight similarities and differences between the two countries in terms of Islamists’ goals and objectives, strategy and methods. The present study proceeds on the following hypotheses:

Regional/global developments and external linkages have played a greater role in the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan than Bangladesh;

Even though Islamist groups in Pakistan and Bangladesh share common organisational features, the circumstances (the context) that give rise to them and that motivate their actions vary widely from one setting to another;

Whereas in Bangladesh the fundamentalists encounter political and ideological challenge from the secular nationalists, the conflict in Pakistan is centred on which variety of Islam - liberal/reformist or orthodox - should constitute the ideological basis of the Republic.