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Islamic Fundamentalism and International Terrorism

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ABSTRACT *Presently, there exists a close linkage between Islamic fundamentalism and global terrorism. Terrorist groups in Islamic world use the Islamic religious doctrines like jihad to justify their terrorist activities. Islamic fundamentalist groups and terrorist groups in the Islamic world often misinterpret the concept of jihad to intensify their struggle against USA and European powers. They have distorted the image of Islam and created the chaos, terror, confusion and suspicions in the minds of non-Muslims. They have widened the gulf between Western world and Islamic world. They are posing serious challenge to spirit of peaceful coexistence, unity of mankind, peace, security and stability.*

KEYWORDS : Anti-Americanism, Islamic Fundamentalism, Jihad

Introductory Background:

Political version of any religion creates terror in the minds of people. Religion brings together the people and eliminates the immorality so long it continues to aims at socio-spiritual development of an individual. When the process of politicisation of religion starts soon it becomes a disruptive and divisive force and shakes the foundation of civil society. Presently, virtually all religious traditions face the same dilemma of unrestrained growth of religious fanaticism. Religious fanatics belonging to various religions have considerably damaged the image of their religion. Nobody has any problem with religious sentiments of fundamentalists so long it does not restrict the religious freedom of other members of society. The over enthusiastic religious follower or fundamentalist irrespective his religion when begin to seeks the redressal of his grievances by unlawful and violent means then he becomes an eyesore and threat to human society.

It is true that religious extremism and religious violence is not a customary feature any specific religion. However, it is also a fact that unfortunately due to wide spread network of religious fanatics in Islamic countries; today global terrorism is being associated with the Islam. Islamic world is facing serious allegations of being partisan of international terrorist groups. In the post Cold War era, political version of Islam and Islamic fundamentalism is censure because of its inclination towards terrorism. Religious fanatics in Islamic world are terribly apprehensive about their future. They glorify their past and repudiate the present state of affairs in Islamic world. Islamic fundamentalists, Islamists and radical Islamic movements aim at restructuring the prevailing socio-political systems in accordance with the teachings of Islam. Currently, Islamic fundamentalists are more aggressive and keen to adopt violent means to accomplish their objectives. They strive for true Islamic order and wish to restore the 'Golden Age' of Islam. They want to eliminate the enemies of Islam. Islamic Fundamentalists misinterpret the Islamic doctrine of Jihad. They propagate an idea that it is socio-religious obligation of every member of Islamic world to participate in their Jihad against the enemies of Muslim in all parts of world. They validate the use of force against those Western countries, Israel and USA.

Islamic Fundamentalism and the Doctrine of Jihad:

Religious fundamentalists in general and Islamic fundamentalists in particular react sharply against the process of Westernization and modernization. In the Islamic world, religious fundamentalist raises serious objections over Western hegemony, Western model of democracy and secularism. In the beginning, radical Islamist groups exposed the exploitative character of European colonial powers in Islamic countries. They unmask the hidden agenda of Western powers to exploit natural resources in Middle East. Religious fundamentalist criticise severely the deliberate efforts made by Western powers to penetrate in social and political systems of Islamic countries. They are unequivocally against the process of modernization of traditional and conservative Islamic societies and installation of puppet secular regimes in Muslim countries to damage Islamic socio-religious and cultural value system. They consider Western interference in the internal affairs of Islamic countries as an attack on Islam. They argue that instead of understanding the genuine social, economic and political

grievances of Islamic world, Western powers under the leadership of United Sates of America have carried on their double-faced foreign and economic policies and have validated the doubts and apprehensions of fundamentalist and terrorist groups. Subsequently, at present, USA has become the target of majority of international terrorist organisations. Anti-Americanism has become an ideological root of many fundamentalist organizations in Islamic countries.

Islamic fundamentalists are also against those Westernised, liberal and secular Muslim socio-religious leaders and moderate intelligentsia in the Islamic world, which is playing in the hands of Western powers. They argue that secular Muslims rulers in various parts of world have betrayed and damaged the socio-religious, economic and political interests of Islamic world. They try to rationalize their outrageous violent acts on the ground that it is their divine duty to fight against the profane social and political order. They think that it is their religious responsibility to declare a Jihad against such political regimes to pave the way for the establishment of Islamic rule. They believe that social, economic and spiritual development of Muslims is not possible in secular regimes. Members of international terrorist organizations claim themselves freedom fighter, Jihadi or mujahedeen.

Jihad is a central and wide-ranging Islamic concept. In Islam, it is believed that it is the sacred duty of every true Muslim to wage a Jihad (Holy War) against the internal and external evil forces, oppression, persecution and enemies of Islam. Islam laid emphasises on self-purification and elimination of ignorance, disbelief and heresy. Muslims are supposed to lay the supreme sacrifices in Jihad to eliminate the adversaries of Islam and to seek the heavenly bliss. However, in the gradual process, the narrow interpretations of Jihad has distorted the image of Islam and become a controversial, misinterpreted and misunderstood concept.

The concept of Jihad is the significant as an historical concept and process that might be understood in light of its historical memory, significance and context. This memory reveals the paradoxes of the difference between the doctrine and its application in real life. It also helps to explain how the image of Islam and Muslims has been distorted, not only by Western understanding, but also by the Muslims themselves. The Jihad (struggle) that has became a central concept in describing the process of self transformation and political activism, both against European colonialism and later against corrupt, un Islamic Muslim states, was primarily one of the reform, not violent revolution. Yet it did include the defence of the Muslim community and of Islam against colonialism and injustice.

The term Jihad is an Arabic verbal noun derived from jahada meaning "to struggle", that is, to struggle with something that is disagreeable or else against something that is wrong. While the frequently used expression "holy war" is not a literal translation, it does summarize the essential idea of Jihad. The Muslim jurists give the most general definition of Jihad as the Muslim believers' exerting their abilities, talents and power in struggling in the path of God using their resources of life, property, speech and all available instruments to make the World of God prevail in this world. It other words, Jihad implies "Striving." an

"effort in the way of God" was originally an obligation to wage war against unbelievers until they accepted Islam or submitted to Islamic rule. A Muslim who dies in Jihad is a martyr (shahid) and directly enters paradise. Monotheists with a sacred book, like Christians and Jews, are not forced to convert and enjoy the status of protected subjects. In battle, an enemy is given three choices: accept Islam and enjoy rights of equality with Muslims; submit and become a tribute-paying subject with religious freedom and protection of one's property; or fight and leave the judgment to God, in which case a defeated enemy becomes part of the booty.

Jihad has dual meanings: its religious meaning and its historically determined political meaning. In its authentic religious meaning, Jihad is a strong effort or series of efforts against negative behaviour or unjust conditions in order to keep one's faith strong and one's existence stable and open to progress; it is to inculcate justice and mercy in one's conscience and then to establish justice and mercy in the community through the individual and the collective conscience. In its historically determined political meaning, Jihad is self-defence and nothing more. It is not aggression, hostility or confrontation. It is unfortunate that the misunderstanding of Jihad has become so prevalent. Jihad is mercy, not a sword; and justice, not violence. And Islam is not a state for some people but a path of mercy for all.

The scholars outlined a number of different types of Jihad, all of which may be grouped into two basic categories, the spiritual Jihad and the physical Jihad. The objects of the first type included one's own soul (nafs), whose evil inclinations had to be overcome, or Satan (Shaitan), whose attempts to sow doubt and confusion and to lead the believer astray had to be perpetually fought. The physical Jihad was aimed at unbelievers outside the Muslim community, as well as hypocrites and troublemakers within the Muslim ranks. Its goal was to establish the supremacy of divine law and thereby to promote justice and social welfare according to Islamic values. In this sense, Jihad was closely related to the Quranic injunction that Muslims "command the right and forbid the wrong" (amr bi_l-ma_ruf wa nahy an al-munkar).

The physical Jihad is communal, pitting an Islamic culture in a crusade of sorts against non Islamic cultures or against Muslims seen to be in a state of apostasy. In some cases, Jihad of this sort involves activities that many Muslims would consider un-Islamic – activities such as suicide and the killing of innocents. Jihad of this sort, known by different names, is common to all religions and cultures. The medieval crusades of European Christians were Jihadist in effect. Jews, Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists, as well as animistic peoples, have all waged war in the name of their religions. Jihad of this sort assumes a natural superiority of one religion over all others and can, of course, lead to unspeakable acts and immense destruction and pain.

On the intimate level, Jihad is working on one's self, mastering one's egoisms and one's own violence; on the social level, it is the struggle for greater justice and against various kinds of discrimination, unemployment, and racism; on the political level, it is the defence of civil responsibilities and rights and the promotion of pluralism, freedom of expression, and the democratic processes; on the economic level, it is action against speculation, monopolies, and neo colonialism; on the cultural level, it is the promotion of the arts and forms of expression that respect the dignity of conscience and human values. These are the Jihads to be carried out in the name of active and responsible citizenship—Jihads that are spiritual as well as social, economic, political, and ecological.

The objective of the Islamic 'Jihad' is to eliminate the rule of an un-Islamic system and establish in its stead an Islamic system of state rule. Islam does not intend to confine this revolution to a single state or a few countries; the aim of Islam is to bring about a universal revolution. Although in the initial stages it is incumbent upon members of the party of Islam to carry out a revolution in the State system of the countries to which they belong, but their ultimate objective is no other than to effect a world revolution. No revolutionary ideology, which champions the principles of the welfare of humanity as a whole instead of upholding national interests, can restrict its aims and objectives to the limits of a country or a nation. The goal of such an all-embracing doctrine is naturally bound to be world revolution. The recognition of the modern state infuriated certain other thinkers who declared their own societies to be Islamic in name only; in reality,

they said, these societies lived in jahiliyya, coarse ignorance, the condition of ancient Arabia before the coming of Islam. They summoned all Muslims to the Jihad, calling this an individual (not a collective) obligation because of the gravity of the situation.

It is believed that a devout Muslim must be prepared to embark upon Jihad, a struggle for self-improvement but also a prime duty to go out and defend the holiness of Islam. That can have a political as well as religious meaning-the land and the faith are sacred. Muslims are continually obligated to spend their resources for good causes. But when a Muslim community is oppressed, occupied or subjugated, they are even more obligated to "fight with their goods and persons," forging a fearless, non-submissive, militant resistance. It is the sacred duty of all Muslims to spread this true religion to the rest of the world. In this sense, Islam is undoubtedly expansionistic. Throughout history, it has expanded by conquest, peaceful conversion, and migration. In growing as a faith as well as geographically, Islam acquired the characteristics of a community, a nation, and eventually an empire. The community of Islam is known as the umma. It constitutes a borderless nation of believers and considers itself separate from the non-Islamic world. From a practical standpoint, the umma includes all the 1.3 billion Muslims throughout the world. Any place Muslims live and practise their faith freely is considered part of the Nation of Islam, or dar-al-Islam.

Unfortunately, in the recent times, the word jihad has become a synonym of global terrorism for the variety of reasons and it has created a lot of havoc, terror and apprehensions in non-Muslim world. It has played a decisive role in radicalization of Islam. It has emerged as an ideological instrument in the hands of extremists, fundamentalists and international terrorist organizations in Islamic countries to rationalize their worldview and actions against Western powers. Religious fanatics in Islamic world often misinterpret Quranic verses, Islamic socio-spiritual and ethical values and give a conservative interpretation of the concept of Jihad. They frequently use this term to mobilize the masses to seek their support, financial assistance and to justify their struggle against secular and un Islamic forces to lay the foundation of an ideal Islamic social, economic and political order in accordance with the teachings of Holy Quran. In the recent past, the Islamic religious doctrine of Jihad has drawn the special attention of the international community. At present, the concept of Jihad has evaluated, discussed, analysed and reviewed in the context of international terrorism and religious fundamentalism. Jihad is equated with the ideology of terrorist groups and it has become the buzzword in era of global terrorism. Neither in Islamic countries nor in the West any serious attempt has made to eliminates the misunderstandings and misinterpretations of this concept. Religious fundamentalist groups feel contented through the misinterpretation of this doctrine because they feel that by doing this they will be successful in creating fear, anxiety and terror in the minds of those to whom they believe as enemy of Islam.

In the Islamic world, the concept of Jihad is use to justify the unlawful use of coercive methods by the radicals and religious fundamentalist to overthrow the moderate, secular and liberal forces in order to establish the new social, political and economic order in accordance to the rigorous Islamic law. International terrorist organizations intentionally offer the distorted and vague interpretation of this religious doctrine. Today due to inhuman activities and indiscriminate use of force by Islamic fundamentalists against common masses, the doctrine of Jihad has blemished the image of Islam at the international level. The politicization of Islamic doctrine of Jihad has encouraged the religious violence, use of violent means to resolve the conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims and consequently shakes the faith of masses in Islam. In given scenario, it would be beneficial for the international community and Islamic world if the religious leaders and intelligentsia in the Islamic world make an attempt to eliminate the prevailing vagueness regarding the concept of Jihad, to improve the image of Islam among non-Muslims and to restrain the youth in Islamic world from getting involve in terrorist activities.

Conclusion:
From the above analysis, it can be concluded that today religious fundamentalists groups in Islamic world are misinterpreting the concept of jihad to seek the ideological, diplomatic, political, economic and physical support for their struggle against the hegemony of USA

and other European countries. They have numerous grievances and they strongly believed that it is only by the unlawful use of force they could return to the golden days of Islamic world. They consciously or unconsciously justify their violent and inhumane acts on religious grounds. Presently, the Islamic terrorist organizations have damaged the image of Islam among non-Muslims. People began to think that Islamic world is quickly becoming the sponsor of terrorist activities and safe haven for enemies of humanity.

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