Department of Political Studies
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SEMINAR PAPER:

# The Crucible:
# Islamism in Britain and the July 7th, 2005 Bombings

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*Author's Note:*

Although the understanding of the powerful influence religion has on a given conflict is a necessary tool, I would like to echo a sentiment common (to my knowledge) in all 3 major monotheistic religions, and a statement of how religion can and should mediate conflict:

*"If one takes a life, it is as if one has taken the life of all humanity. If one saves a single life, it is as if he has saved the life of all humanity"*

**Introduction**

The events of July 7th, 2005 are not merely another bloody outburst in the ongoing continuum between the "forces of good" and "the forces of evil" (whose identities are heavily dependent on perspective and personal belief) following September 11th, 2001. As Juergensmayer has noted, "the inevitable clash of civilizations will be fought in less conventional ways, namely terrorism" (Gill, 2000, p. 127). The idea that amongst a modern, liberal, democratic, and open society there could exist a substrata of seemingly ordinary individuals who, on the basis of their beliefs, would dedicate their energies towards overturning such a host society and recreating it in a different image seemed to be the most shocking aspect of the London bombings. It troubled ordinary Britons that someone who was, essentially, just like them, would harbor such beliefs and commit towards a plan to act on them. This was the true shock to Londoners on the morning of July 7th, 2005.

The existence of a continued conflict between what many term "the West" and those who would term themselves the "true" inheritors of the Prophet Muhammad has been examined from many aspects. It is, to use a cliché, as old as both religions, and has spread far from its Middle Eastern roots. It is what Devji terms "the surprising disproportion" between the severely limited means of the terrorists and the seemingly limitless ends which they have accomplished. The uniqueness of the events in London highlight the religious element in this conflict. Although other characteristics do play a role, this paper will assign a primary role to the religious paradigm of the British perpetrators. Certain theoretical aspects governing the influence of religion on a conflict

will be discussed, and then the events pertaining to the London bombings will be discussed in this theoretical context. In the aftermath of those horrendous events, it was Britons, influenced by a special version of Islam, who perpetrated the acts.

## **Religion and Conflict**

Religion is a human phenomenon that defies easy definition. It is commonly understood as a group of beliefs or attitudes concerning an object, person, or system of thought considered to be supernatural or sacred, and the codes, practices, values, institutions, and rituals associated with such belief or system of thought. It is, as Durkheim notes, not "exclusively either an obligatory philosophy, or a practical discipline; it is both one and the other at the same time"(Durkheim, 1975, p. 92). As well, religion has within it tremendous impetus to empower and direct violence (Fox, 2000, p. 3-4). Religions also, like temporal homes, must be defended by their adherents (Little, 1996, p. 87).

Islam is one of the "Big Three" monotheistic religions, with millions of adherents around the world. It is a truly global religion, with members in most countries worldwide. It has been noted by Daniel Pipes that statistical data indicates that most British Muslims **perceive a conflict** between their British and Muslim identity (*The Jerusalem Post*, July 13, 2006). One Muslim respondent to a sociological study in Britain noted three interdependent elements of identity in descending order of importance: "Muslim, Bengali, and British…if you take the top two away, that wouldn't be me. If you take the British away, that would still be me (Ansari, 2004, p. 17)." And, this conflict dictates that Islam must be defended as well through various means, including violence.

Religion has four main avenues upon which to affect influence in a conflict. Firstly, religion gives its adherents *frameworks of faith*, which integrate meanings for reality and the role of a person within it. Turner quotes Bell who notes that religion contains the set of coherent answers to a series of core existential questions which confront every human group (Turner, 1991, p. 244). Religion thus can influence the beliefs and values of its adherents.

Secondly, religion dictates to its followers the *standards of conduct and behavior*; it lets its adherents know, what is permissible and what is not, and under what frameworks and contexts extraordinary measures and actions can be taken. As Gill notes: "Almost all religious traditions have some form of rules dictating who is a member of the spiritual community and which members can make official pronouncements regarding doctrinal content (Gill, 2001, p. 120)." These guidelines and leaders serve to regulate the behavior of adherents.

Thirdly, the *institutions* of the religion itself such as places of worship, clergy, and holy days which utilize elements such as people, place, and time can all be utilized within the context of the conflict. "Almost all religions take on some kind of strict institutional form (Gill, 2001, p.130)" and, using this form, can influence or affect a conflict.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, religion provides *legitimacy* ;it provides the fundamental basis for its adherents as to which actions are legitimate or not. This legitimacy provides both a powerful impetus and retrospective justification for thoughts and actions. Durkheim notes the chain by which legitimacy is imposed by noting that religion is obligatory. For the individual to behave in accordance with certain rules,

which must stem from a moral authority capable of dominating the adherents (Durkheim, 1975, p. 93). This is what Weber terms turning discipline (of behavior) into adherence to the truth represented by religion (Turner, 1991, p. 188)

These four avenues will serve as the basis for analysis, on several different levels, for the influence of religion on the conflict. Religion will be examined on the macro-level as in the general case of Islam within modern Britain, and on the micro level as it pertains specifically to the bombers who perpetuated the attacks on July 7th, 2005.

We will be discussing a fundamentalist movement; in our case **Islamism** or Islamic fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is present in most religions and parts of the world (Fox, 2001, p. 68). Fundamentalist movements grew out of the response of religion to modernity and they "seek political power to complement and enforce their religious and cultural programs (Appleby, 1994, p.8)." Fundamentalists take a pro-active stance against the erosion of their faith. As Appleby notes, not only a conservative or traditional stance is enough, fundamentalists must take active measures. Fundamentalism is neither a "new religious movement" (in the technical sense) nor a "traditional", "conservative", or "orthodox" expression of faith. Rather it forms a category by itself. While fundamentalists claim to be defending orthodoxy (established practice) or orthopraxy (correctness of practice), they do so by utilizing new methods and practices (Appleby, 1994, p.10). Moreover, the idea that they are doing something new radically challenges the fundamentalist assertion that the source is in a sacred tradition or text to which they are adhering (Appleby, 1994, p. 11).This pronounced "rootedness" is characteristic of fundamentalist movements. The blending and interchange inherent in the 20th century world also serves to shape fundamentalism. According to Appleby, fundamentalism is

culturebound. And, although it is not necessarily of a completely religious nature, and can be blended with others such as history or ethnicity, the dependence on a cultural matrix to base the movement is paramount (Appleby, 1994, p. 14). Fundamentalists aim to reclaim the fundamentals – the absolutely essential elements - or basics from a sacred past or text. These texts are the sacred blueprint for socio-political action (Appleby, 1994, p. 17). These ideas are then grafted onto modern bureaucratic, military and political concepts. And this hybridization is useful for pursuing the organizational and ideological ideals (Appleby, 1994, p. 15) However, Mawdudi himself disdained violence as the means to achieve these things and preferred democratic means (Little, 1996, p. 84). Charismatic male leaders play a central role in Islamic fundamentalist movements. It is this leader who analyzes the nature of the times, and is able to extract and embellish modern meanings from the ancient sacred texts. (Appleby, 1994, p. 32-33). One of the best explanations for fundamentalists' success is their persistent service for people in need. Social actions serve to recruit new members, to gather support amongst the indigenous community as well as acting to counter the effects of their contemporary society. Heroism and self-sacrifice, to fundamentalists, represent a special kind of immortality (Appleby, 1994, p. 41). The expectation of an afterlife is a powerful motivational factor and gives fundamentalists an important advantage in mobilizing people for dangerous assignments and retaining them as long term members. Moreover, in Islam, as Devji notes (Devji, 2005, p. 96-99), martyrdom or *shahadat* has taken on a more inclusive, global nature by involving the mass media. All those involved within an act of martyrdom are participants, willing or not, in the fundamentalists' world. Fundamentalists are, in essence missionaries, who are experts in speaking the language of

their audiences. Most new religious movements, especially within Islam, have been confrontational in their stance against secular governments (Gill, 2001, p. 123). On the basis of a sacred background, they can tap a communities deep allegiances and history as a form of "cultural capital" (Appleby, 1994, p.72) and, using modern means, seek to recreate the world in a "pure" image.

## Islam and Islamism in Modern Britain

By the end of World War II there were fewer than one million Muslim people living in Western Europe, mostly in France and the United Kingdom. By 2002, this figure had risen to more than 15 million Muslims ranging from Scandinavia to Italy (Tibi, 2002, p.33). It is wrong however, to relate this entire Muslim presence to migration, due to the fact that nearly 8 million native European Muslims live in southeast Europe. Moreover, another interesting aspect is the fact that even third-generation Muslim residents of Europe, born and bred on the Continent, are still not accepted as part of the European polity (Tibi, 2002, p. 33). Lubeck has noted that non-European communities from Asia and Africa are now a "permanent and institutionalized feature of the EU urban landscape", a majority of whom are Muslims. Muslims, Lubeck claims, have become Europe's archetypal "Other"; they are the largest, most diverse, and most economically marginalized immigrant group resident in the European Union (Lubeck, 2002, p. 75). Lastly, on a quantitative scale, the Muslim population of Europe as a whole doubled between 1989 and 1999(Davis, 2003, p. 60). The globalization process has been characterized by the large-scale movement of people from former colonies to the

countries of the former colonizers, sometimes leading to confrontations over identity issues. Muslims in Europe resist being treated as "outsiders", but at the same time many of them also resist-and face barriers to-assimilation as traditional European citizens (AlSayyad, 2002, p.9).

The history of this immigration to Britain is dominated by immigrants coming from the Indian subcontinent. The earliest mosque was established in the 1890's, and the first Islamist organization, The UK Islamic Mission, whose Pakistani roots are in the *Jamaat-i-Islami* , was established in 1962, and probably the best established and organized of all organizations in Britain (Pedersen, 1999, p. 51). The early years of the growth of the Muslim community in Britain shared a similar process. First, single prayer rooms were set up to serve the whole Muslim population, which only later give way to a series of smaller, rival mosques. The mosque's founders represented the different currents of Islam under the British *Raj*. Two rival groupings, *Deobandis* and *Barelvis*, were extant, but neither possessed a "truly unified organizational structure"(Kepel, 1997, p. 104).

In the process of post World War II decolonization, the citizens of the Commonwealth retained full political rights as British citizens, even if their political behavior was dictated by allegiances formed in their native lands (Kepel, 1997, p. 97). This unique status accompanied, and facilitated the great waves of Muslim immigration into the United Kingdom in the 1950s and 1960s. The Indian and Pakistani Muslim populations which settled in Britain came from a background in which minority status and exclusion from political life had a long history.

Large scale immigration began in the 1950's, and led to Islam becoming the largest non-Christian group within the United Kingdom (Bradney, 2000, p. 182). A 1995 study stated that there were 0.52 million Muslims within the UK, and by 2002, this number had risen to between one and two million (Modood, 2002, p. 113 and Ansari, 2004, p. 170-174). As well, Muslims tend to come from the lowest socio-economic levels in British society in a disproportionate fashion from other immigrant communities (Bradney, 2000, p. 183). Pedersen also proposes that the reason Britain is the country with the highest degree of uncertainty about the religious faith of the immigrant population is because most are actually United Kingdom citizens, and the traditional correlation between country of origin and religious affiliation is the method by which the estimate of the number of Muslim residents is traditionally made (Pederson, 1999, p. 51).

Lenient laws in Britain governing political asylum have allowed large numbers of Islamists to establish themselves within the United Kingdom's Islamic communities. In the words of one analyst:" People who didn't have permission to get into Egypt got political asylum in Britain (Davis, 2003, p. 175)". The global pressures driving transnational migration do not cease at the end of Britain's immigration laws. Political asylum has become a method for circumventing the standard immigration procedures, in effect becoming a parallel immigration route (Lubeck, 2002, p.80-81).

More seriously, most of the "foundation, recruitment, and support for Islamist terrorist groups was coming from youngsters in the Muslim communities in Europe. London has been described as "the biggest Islamic center in the world (Davis, 2003, p. 175)", in which the presence of radicals was tolerated as long as they were not working directly against the UK.  Thus, Great Britain became the axis around which a small world

begun during the Afghan *jihad* in the 1980s began to assemble. The popular nickname "Londonistan" has been applied to these centers of Islamic or Muslim opposition, most of which focus on their countries of origin. In return for the United Kingdom's hospitality, Kepel declares, the country was considered a **terror-free zone** of sanctuary for militants, Islamists, and radicals of every persuasion (Kepel, 2002, p. 303).

Sheikh Omar Bakri, a resident of London who, until August 1998, described himself as bin Laden's spokesman in London, is the leader of a radical group called *al Muharijun* – "The Immigrants" – and does not hide his and their goal of wanting to establish a new Islamic caliphate, which they believe is destined to rule the world (Davis, 2003, p. 91). This is one example of the Islamism prevalent during the 1990s and 2000s within the British Muslim community. It bears the markings of fundamentalism described above; it is a pro-active movement seeking to draw upon sacred textual sources and use modern means to establish a "pure" society for a religion –as shown above – perceived by its adherents to be in conflict.

As noted earlier, religion can serve to dictate the *standards of behavior and conduct* within its adherent community. In Britain, Islam has had a role in shaping "appropriate" behavior since its beginnings in modern Britain (Ansari, 2004, p. 5). Kepel notes that the "cinemas, dance halls, pubs, and other distractions of British or Irish working-class life meant nothing to the Muslim immigrants; prayer gatherings or discussions about Pakistan occupied most of their free time (Kepel, 1997, p. 106)." Both kinds of human behavior- individual duties towards G-d (the 5 pillars of Islam, primarily devotional in nature), and individual duties towards society (relations with other human beings)- are regulated by *Sharia* (Ansari, 2004, p. 226-228). Also, certain practices such

as strict observance of the Muslim dietary laws – *halal* - within the framework of British society constitutes a key element marking the boundary between the community and the others. However, it can go far beyond refusing to lunch with the co-workers. Two of Bakri's former students, crossed the boundary into, what was to them, the legitimate murder of civilians.. Asif Muhammed Hanif posed as a peace activist and killed three people during a suicide attack in Tel Aviv, Israel on April 30, 2003, while his fellow student, Omar Khan Sharif, failed to detonate his bomb and his body washed up on the beach under mysterious circumstances (Davis, 2003, p. 56).  Some of Sharif's neighbours in Britain wondered what caused the radicalization of the well-educated and thoroughly Westernized Mr. Sharif. Other British Muslims have admired his example and one, Shakil Mohammed, was quoted as saying:" *I would volunteer: more and more people will follow him…It's only a matter of time before somebody blows themselves up in this country- that will definitely happen…(*Davis, 2003, p. 57)" On oddly prescient statement in light of the bombings of 2005. Bakri has been forthright about his intentions by acknowledging the laws in England which guarantee his freedom of speech to declare his wish to "*transform the West into Dar al-Islam*" and to "*see the black flag of Islam flying over Downing Street*"(Davis, 2003, p. 55). Bakri has said that "*if an Islamic state arises and invades the West, we will be its army and its soldiers from within*." However, if no such Islamic state arises, Bakri says Muslims will convert the West to Islam through "*ideological invasion*"(Davis, 2003, p. 56).   Thus, we see that Islam does dictate the behavior of its adherents in Britain from the mundane to the macabre, and these standards of behavior are part of the greater conflict  within British Muslims.

The source of *legitimacy* for British Muslims is conflicted. Only a small portion (7-12 percent) of British Muslims identify themselves first as British (*The Jerusalem Post,* July 13, 2006). And, the wave of Islamism under discussion takes Islamic theology as its starting point in criticism of the existing system. It bases itself not on mainstream theology, but on those of "state criticism" by Islamic philosophers and politicians such as Ibn Taymiyya, Hassan al-Banna, Sayed Qutb, Maududi, and Khomeini. The ideals of this style of Islamism seek to confront injustices in the state apparatus, social need, and economic exploitation. Instead of the corrupt West, Islam, as a model for society, offers an alternative to suffering. "Using Islam as their chosen means, Muslim minorities in Western Europe are developing a region of consciousness and culture in which the social norms of the majority society do not count. The development which this expresses exists not only at an individual level, but also at a collective one, in the new organizational parameters are being established (Pedersen, 1999, p. 3)." Thus, The Muslim communities which subscribe to such views exist as separate "bubbles" within Western society, drawing the source of their legitimacy from Muslim, rather than Western means. In doing so, they negate what Kohn (quoted by Juergensmayer) calls the "state of mind" of nationalism, in "which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due the nation state (Juergensmayer, 1993, p. 14)." The nascent Muslim community in Britain faced a sizeable cultural challenge: the consequences of the socialization of their children within an "open society" where they would meet children of their age from different cultural backgrounds (Kepel, 1997, p. 109). The teaching of Islam in the United Kingdom which existed to keep the "distinct identity" of Muslims and remove them from the "permissive, materialistic Western society" was seen as inadequate (Kepel, 1997, p. 110-111). This

"hegemonic struggle" over what defines the identity of Muslims within the United Kingdom is exacerbated by what Husband calls "defensive boundary maintenance through cultural self-definition (Husband, 1994, p. 97)." This communalism, when enforced by external xenophobia and internal Islamic impulse, allows for the creation of a specifically "Islamic" framework in which the community, as Kepel notes regarding a specifically Islamic supermarket in Britain, the *Al Halal* Supermarket, in which capital is invested "in an Islamic way", creates "Islamic" jobs, and allows them to eat "Islamic" food (Kepel, 1997, p. 108)

A 1985 seminar, which served as a forum for the grievances of the Muslim community in response to an attempt to redefine multiculturalism as genuine pluralism and social integration, makes it clear that "The Muslim community cannot accept the secular philosophical basis of the report, and thus commit itself to follow "all current laws", however anti-religious those laws may become through democratic means (Kepel, 1997, p. 120)." This, in essence, is the central dilemma of legitimacy for Muslims under non-Muslim rule; their religion, as noted above, is the sole source of legitimacy, and as such, cannot come into conflict with other sources of authority or power, which are, by their very existence as non-Islamic sources of legitimacy, illegitimate.

Bakri himself, as well, has shown his understanding of the protection of British citizenship:" …as long as my words do not become actions, they do no harm, Here, the law does not punish you for words, as long as there is no proof you have carried out actions. In such a case you are still on the margins of the law, and they cannot punish you. If they want to punish you, they must present evidence against you, otherwise <u>their laws</u> (*author's underline*) will be in a state of internal contradiction". Once again, in

spite of the fact that Bakri was living in Britain as a seeker of asylum from persecution in Muslim countries, he defines the laws of Britain as not his own; his own law and the sole source of legitimate authority is still *Sharia*.

The *institutions* of Islamic life, as noted, are the center of Muslim life in Britain. They often serve as place of refuge, both physical and spiritual, for the Muslim population. According to Kepel, the "close relationship between mosques and social services has encouraged the emergence of a certain type of leader who has an interest in perpetuating the community boundary, since it makes them indispensable as intermediaries (Kepel, 1997, p. 114)". Thus the institutions can serve to perpetuate the "bubbles" of Islamism and the perceptions of conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims in Britain. Mosques are central foci of communal activity for British Muslim communities and the dialogue within them generates greater political awareness (Werbner, 1994, p. 114). Since the early 1960s, the Muslim community identity remained both fragmented and inward-looking. The recreated "little villages" of Muslims in post-industrial Britain each centers on its own prayer room. Preachers and religious leaders such as *Imam*s, play a vital role in the spiritual education of young Muslims (*The Times*, April 20, 2006). The attitudes they inculcate can determine whether or not Muslims will attempt to reconcile Islam with life in Britain successfully or whether a new generation is "embittered, alienated, and religiously cast adrift" to perceive only conflict with the society and values around it (Kepel, 1997, p. 106). Moreover, secular Britons perceived Muslim Britons' demands for separate Islamic schools as an attempt to create "pockets of pure Islamic culture sealed off from the influence of the majority culture of Western Europe where Muslim pupils could be diverted into some isolated and possibly militant

tributary (Ansari, 2004, p. 10)." Young Muslims also have begun forming their own institutions independent of their elders' in which their own needs are more adequately expressed. Some groups and institutions with a predominantly Islamist bent such as *Hizb-u-Tahrir* and *al-Muharijun* emerged in the 1990s, and "acquired resonance" amongst young Muslims - *Hizb-u-Tahrir* had more than 3000 supporters at a rally in 1995 – for helping them deal with perceptions of bias, racism, and injustice towards Muslims within British society and on a global scale (Ansari, 2004, p. 373).

The Muslim community in the United Kingdom forms part of what Lubeck refers to as a transnational network or, to use an Islamic term, the worldwide *ummah*. He notes: "Compared to other world civilizations, Muslim cultural practices, ritual obligations, and institutions encourage an unusually high degree of geographical mobility across vast distances and different political units." The historical background of the development of an Islamic society included within itself the creation and maintenance of long-distance networks for communication, commerce, and culture. The foundation of these networks led to institutionalization of a cosmopolitan Muslim culture – the transnational, transethnic community of the *ummah* governed by a universalistic Islamic law, the *Sharia*. In spite of various historical challenges, this trend has survived and been emphasized by contemporary Islamist philosophers and theorists. This global *ummah* comprises a powerful tool for the integration of Muslim communities worldwide. Thus, Muslims, wherever they go, have a waiting network of institutions which are helpful, understood, and universal. Devji refers to this as the *de-territorialization* of Islam, such that it is not one country or another that is important, but Islam itself as a global entity (Devji, 2005, p. 28). The first modern instance of this occurred amongst the Muslim

community of Great Britain, when, along with their co-religionists in Pakistan and India, and under the direction of a *fatwa* (religious directive) from Iran's *Ayatollah* Khomeini in 1989, they were galvanized into violent protests against the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* as an affront to Islam (Devji, 2005, p. 53).

In the contexts of *framework of faith*, Islam stresses an all-encompassing holism. Islamic scholars have described it as "Islam is everything, and everything is Islam." In the words of one British convert to Islam:" *...Islam is the belief in Allah, but it is also a belief in a unique type of society. A unique social structure. The Prophet was sinless and perfect, he was Allah's instrument to transform mankind and change the world.*(Werbner, 1994, p. 104)" Islam teaches that what the West conceives as "law" is an essential part of the religion. The law, in Islam, is Divinely-inspired revelation, and, as such, cannot be amended or revoked by other forces. It deals equally with the private, public, civil and criminal spheres of life (Lewis, 1994, p. 1-3). As well, there is a built-in dominance in the Islamic world regarding other cultures. As Bernard Lewis says," *In any encounter between Islam and unbelief, Islam must dominate* (Lewis, 1994, p. 13)". Lewis also states that the idea of any kind of secular authority is "the ultimate betrayal of Islam" and that the "righting of this wrong is the primary aim of Islamic revolutionaries (Juergensmayer, 1993, p. 20)." This aim is echoed within the Islamist community in Britain, and the bombers themselves, as an integral part of their faith.

The British Muslim population has several distinctions. Surveys have shown that, although one third of all Britons claim to have no religion, nearly all South Asians (referring to immigrants from India, Pakistan and the neighboring regions) have one, and 90 percent of them said religion was of personal importance to them (Modood, 2002, p.

121). The levels of religious commitment noted amongst the younger portions of these populations were also significantly high. Thus, one can see that Islam plays an important role in defining how the British Muslims interact. When challenged regarding outlandish Quranic claims , a famous British Islamist has stated :"I say the reality that's in the Muslim books anyway.  Whether I say it or not, it's in the books (Davis, 2003, p. 59)." And, as noted above, those books, in the eyes of some British Muslims, are the only ones which truly matter. Social revolutionaries also have argued their case from an Islamic standpoint. Islam, as such, discovered a role as a frame of reference for socio-political groups in opposition (Pedersen, 1999, p. 2).  The maintenance of orthodox Islamic views among parts of the Muslim community in Europe, in particular the idea that migration is related to the *da'wa* (the call to Islam) is a cause of concern for certain researchers (Tibi, 2002, p. 42). This emphasis on *da'wa* causes asymmetry, which exists in that it is the duty of a Muslim, wherever he may be, to bring the faith to the unbelievers. There are no missionaries in Islam because each Muslim has a missionary obligation (Werbner, 1994, p. 104). *Jihad* is  a part of this duty upon every Muslim. However, theology has defined many things as *jihad*: defending the faith from criticism, supporting its growth and defense financially, and even migrating to non-Muslim lands for the purpose of spreading Islam. Another infamous British Islamist personality, the forbidding, one-eyed, hook-handed Abu Hamza al-Masri of the Finsbury Park Mosque in London has said:" Martyrdom is the highest form of *jihad*."  *Sura* 2:216 states: "*Warfare is ordained for you, though it is hateful to you; but it may happen that you hate a thing which is good for you, and it may happen that you love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows, you know not*"(Davis, 2003, p. 20). Thus, it follows that G-d understands things that Man does not,

and that Man may fulfill G-d's purpose even through war. In fact, Islamic scholars say that Muslims have a duty to struggle against evil, both within themselves and against the world around them. Militants argue that because their leaders are corrupt and Islam under siege, each individual (as an individual) is compelled to declare his (*sic*) own personal *jihad* to liberate that land from Western control and to overthrow their corrupt governments(Davis, 2003, p.20-21).  Young Muslims in Britain must reconcile their faith amongst what Ansari terms three distinct spheres: "the individualistic and critical ethos" of the secular state education system, the prescriptive teachings of Islam at the mosque, and the home, where after mosque school the young are exposed to South Asian videos, with their beguiling world of music, drama , and dance(Ansari, 2004, p. 219)."  Within this conflict described by Ansari, young Muslims under the influence of Islamists hear that martyrdom in the cause of the *jihad* is part of their duty as Muslims to combat evil and right wrongs, as part of the spread of Islam itself.

Thus, we have described above how, on a macro- level, each of the four avenues of religion has influence upon the conflict between Islam and "Britishness" within British Muslims.  We will proceed to examine on the micro- level how these four avenues were expressed in the bombers themselves who perpetuated the attacks.

## The July 7th, 2005 Bombings

The story of the London bombings on July, 7, 2005 was captured in the media. The fact that four young suicide terrorists – what the media called "home-grown terrorists" – were able to turn themselves into human bombs, killing 52 and injuring more

than 700, in an amateurish operation which cost merely £ 8,000 is astonishing. More chilling are the notes in official reports on how four young Britons made the transition over to Islamic fundamentalist-style violence (*The Times*, May 12, 2006).

One of the flaws noted in the Intelligence and Security Committee's (ISC) report was lack of understanding "regarding the process by and speed at which young British Muslims could be radicalized". This, the creation of fundamentalist-based violent activists, is the crux of the matters within which the bombings occurred.  Moreover, the *Times* noted that "the threat of young British Muslims, radicalized by extremist preachers and groomed by hardcore activists, perpetrating a suicide attack was at the forefront of police contingency plans for a terrorist attack several months before 7/7(*The Times*, May 12 2006)." The ISC report noted the committee's concern that "the development of a home-grown threat and the radicalization of British citizens" not fully understood or applied to strategic thinking.  In the aftermath of the attacks, Nader Mozakka, a Muslim whose wife perished in the Russel Square explosion, noted that "people are being radicalized left, right , and center,,,"

The perpetrators were a varied lot. Detainees from the US facility in Guantanamo Bay in 2004 spoke of "men from the UK, known only by pseudonyms, who had traveled to Pakistan and met *al-Qaeda* figures (only in the aftermath of the London attacks were men in the pictures circulating amongst the detainees identified as Mohammed Siddique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer). All three Pakistanis were second-generation British citizens, whose parents had come to West Yorkshire to work, and later settled and taken citizenship (HC 1087, 2005, p.13). As such, they were typical products of the British Muslim community described above, and possessed, to some degree, the conflicts and

characteristics therein.  Jermaine Lindsay, the fourth bomber, was different in that he was a first-generation convert to Islam, although he shared many of the characteristics of the British Muslim community with the other three such as a sense of alienation, low socio-economic standing, and was also affected by the conflict.

All of the bombers were bound into an Islamic consciousness of *frameworks of faith*. Evidence regarding the bombers indicates their subscription to fundamentalist/ Islamist  views which were determined to create an "Islamic way of life" within British society. It is interesting to note however, that most of the modern *jihad* – including the London bombings - has not resulted directly from oppressive conditions in the Muslim world, because the fighters themselves often have little or no actual experience of such conditions (Devji, 2005, p. 4) and this was the case with the London bombers as well. Khan, like many young Muslims in the modern West, had flirted with alcohol and drugs, but, following a nightclub incident, he turned to religion. He was known in his school for his open support of *al-Qaeda* and was said to have wrote "al-Qaeda, no limits" on his school religious education textbook. Jermaine Lindsay is said to have been influenced by fellow Jamaican-born extremist preacher Abdallah al-Faisal. He attended at least one lecture of al-Faisal's, had tapes of other lectures, and had been disciplined in school for handing out leaflets in support of *al-Qaeda*. Shehzad Tanweer took his Islam seriously from a young age. A gifted student and sportsman, he began to show greater influence from religion when  he dropped out of classes at Leeds Metropolitan University and started working in his family's fish-and-chips shop. This was seen as a sign of change and friends noted religion had become "the center of his life". All of the perpetrators were linked by a feeling of "fierce antagonism against the injustices done to Muslims by

the West (HC 1087, 2005, p. 26)." These beliefs, both in the promotion of Islam and the pervasive feelings of antagonism towards the West, served as the *framework of faith* for the perpetrators.

It is interesting to note that as far as *standards of behavior*, there were only subtle changes. All four of the perpetrators were outwardly unexceptional members of the Muslim community on the outskirts of Leeds, and second-generation British citizens. Three of them grew up in Beeston and Holbeck, which were typical of the lower class areas in a large British city, with a large transitory element.  Hussain participated in 2002, along with his family, in the *Haj* (series of pilgrimage rituals) to Mecca, after which he took to wearing traditional Muslim garb. He also told his school teachers he was thinking of becoming a Muslim cleric, and began intensive studies of religious texts and prayers. In this, Hussain exemplified the fundamentalist "return to the texts" discussed above which was characteristic of his adoption of Islamist views. Hussain began to project an increasingly observant image, such as wearing white on Fridays (the Muslim holy day) and it was reported that he would stay up until early hours praying and reading religious texts (HC 1087, 2005 p. 15). Jermaine Lindsay, following his conversion, was noted for his abilities to memorize the *Quran* and other texts, and for his adoption of traditional dress (HC 1087, 2005, p. 18). All of these subtle increases in religiosity were noted only in retrospect as part of the bombers conversion. Of course, the most serious change in their standard of behavior was the bombers' decision to embark on a suicide mission itself. The necessity for concealment of their plans, not only from the security forces but from their fellow Muslims, was noted amongst all the bombers. Although sometimes subtle, their Islamism was a source of change in their standards of behavior as well.

As noted above, the most shocking aspect of the attacks was the notion that "ordinary British citizens" could become home-grown terrorists. This necessitated, it is assumed, a powerful change in how the bombers perceived the *legitimacy* of their actions. The dichotomy noted above amongst British Islamists in which the laws of the land become, to the Islamist, "their laws" and as Pedersen noted, the social norms of the host society become irrelevant, was present here as well. The leader and recruiter Mohammed Siddique Khan's video Last Will and Testament, was aired on *Al-Jazeera* on Sept. 1, 2006 contains some relevant passages to this effect (HC 1087, 2005, p. 19):

"*Our religion is obedience to the one true God, Islam, and following in the footsteps of the final messenger and Prophet Mohammed…this is how our ethical stances are dictated , I myself make da'wa to Allah, to raise myself amongst those whom I love like the prophets, the martyrs, and today's heroes like our beloved Sheikh Osama bin Laden, Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri, and Abu-Musab al-Zarqawi that are fighting in the…of this cause.*"

The epitaphic video also contained these words:" *Your* democratically elected governments perpetuate atrocities against *my* people all over the world. And your support of them makes you *directly responsible*, just as I am *directly responsible* for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters [italics mine]."

Khan's video is one of the sole examples of the beliefs that the bombers, in spite of being raised in Britain, assert that the source of legitimacy for their actions is found within Islam. Khan noted that their "ethical stances" are dictated by Islam, as noted above, which has powerful basis for the legitimacy of armed violence as part of the *jihad*. Moreover, Khan's quote is echoed in other Islamist publications, who remove the idea

that *jihad* is a duty of the state and instead place it as an individual obligation (Devji, 2005, p. 34). The bombers had removed themselves from mainstream British society, and felt that the oppression by the West and Britain of Muslims legitimized their actions. Moreover, it would seem, that they were assuming a personal responsibility for what they perceived to be a global injustice. This is what Little refers to as the sacred application of religious principles to the notion of "public emergency"; in this, a certain group of people believe themselves to be "catastrophically threatened" and are the sole representatives acting for the whole (Little, 1996, p. 82). The bombers no longer believed in the secular British state and its laws; rather, their source of *legitimacy* came from Islamist perceptions of Islam and the duties it placed upon them, such as *jihad*.

The religious *institutions*, especially, played an important role in recruitment and organization towards the attacks. Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri himself noted that a "jihadist movement needs an arena that would act like an incubator where its seeds would grow..(Devji, 2005, p. 63)" and it is usually Muslim institutions, especially those in the West, which have served this purpose. The official report notes also that both Beeston and Holbeck had a mosque, community center, and Islamic bookshop to cater to the Muslim communities needs (HC 1087, 2005, p. 13-15). In Khan's neighborhood, the Islamic Tarbiyah Academy teaches youngsters to reject the "moral depravity" of Western culture, and parents are urged not to betray their children by allowing them to attend secular schools (*The Times* April 28, 2006). Khan, as the leader of the group, had a ready pool of disgruntled, Islamized young people to choose his martyrs from. Khan had been known in his community for his community work and served as a role model for other young Muslims in Leeds, urging clean living and avoiding crime. Along with that

message, however, he propagated Islamist views. Whatever he may have said – which remains largely unknown- he was woven into the fabric of a young, Muslim society and had the ability to recruit others to his cause. Khan had visited the sites of the original modern-day *Jihad*, in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and while there, is believed to have met *al-Qaeda* figures (*The Times*, May 12, 2006). Thus, he served as a conduit between different branches of Lubeck's transnational network, to link up with *al-Qaeda*. Moreover, the local Islamic institutions also served as a center of support, allowing the bombers a place to congregate, discuss and meet without undue suspicion, just like hundreds of other young Muslims in the area. In the months before the attacks, Khan, Tanweer, and Hussein were seen together in the institutions of the fundamentalist fringe of the Leeds Muslim community: mosques, bookshops, the gym known as "the al-Qaeda gym", and the social clubs of the Beeston area. The importance of the religious *institutions* in the preparation and execution of the attacks cannot be denied.

The beliefs they had adopted brought the bombers to a single conclusion. Their personal responsibility lay in an act of *jihad* against the West. The four bombers left Leeds at approximately four in the morning on July 7th, 2005. Having reached London and entered into the crowded public transit system, they were prepared to execute a "martyrdom" or *shahadat* "operation". At approximately nine o'clock and apparently by pre-arranged agreement, three of the bombers detonated their devices on crowded London Underground subway trains. For as yet unknown reasons, the fourth bomber detonated his device almost an hour later on a commuter bus.

**<u>Conclusion</u>**

Religion, despite over two hundred years of predictions of its demise, remains important and influential. Muslims governed by the perception that they are part of a worldwide community of the *ummah*, governed by the G-d-given and infallible codes of belief and behavior enshrined in the *Quran* and the *Sharia* are , by necessity, in conflict with Western secular concepts of national sovereignty and law, as well as popular democracy.  The spread of Islamist views amongst the close-knit and antagonized British Muslim community continues. According to Daniel Pipes (*The Jerusalem Post*, July 13, 2006) over half of British Muslims, almost a year after the attacks, want Islamic law and 5 percent endorse violence to achieve that end. This indicates that both past and potential terrorists in Britain live in a highly nurturing community.  As the archetypal "Other", antagonized by the West, and bearing the torch of Islam, the Muslim community in Britain promotes the radicalization of its members.

Islamism was the impetus for the bombers conversion. With Islam under attack, it needed defenders. In promising an afterlife and extolling *shahadat*, it provided a powerful motivation against danger and the inherent human desire for self-preservation to permit the bombers to commit suicide attacks.  It utilized adherents' desires to help people in need and correct wrongdoing as sources of legitimacy.  The charisma of its leaders attracted motivated adherents to its specific ideals.  From within Islam, it found both the culture-bound matrix and the "rootedness" necessary to recruit and train adherents who would finally carry out the attacks.  It used the texts and practices of Islam

to provide the bombers' with a "sacred blueprint" for their very modern, socio-political action.

The effects of Islam as a religion on this conflict have been illustrated above. The effects of all four avenues of influence have been illustrated as they pertained to the larger British Muslim community and more specifically, to the bombers themselves. Without religion, there would neither have been what Durkheim terms the "obligatory philosophy" or the "practical discipline" which would create a suitable environment from which to direct the violence necessary to launch the attacks. The motivations, standards, institutions, and most importantly, legitimacy, which allowed four seemingly innocuous British Muslims to commit mass murder by suicide attack came from solely and specifically from their own particular version of Islam. These factors remain cogent amongst many other Muslims worldwide, and are worthy of further study.

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## Appendix I – Chronology of July 7<sup>th</sup> Attacks

**3:58 am** GMT- Three of the bombers, Mohammed Siddique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer, and Hasib Hussein, leave Hyde Park Road in Leeds, northern England.
**4:54 am** – They stop at the Woodall service station on M1 highway.
**5:07 am** – Jermaine Lindsay arrives at Luton rail station
**6:49 am** – The three from Leeds arrive at Luton rail station
**7:40 am** – The Thameslink train leaves Luton
**8:23 am** – The train arrives at King's Cross station. At King's Cross, the four perpetrators separate.
   1) Tanweer takes a eastbound Circle Line train
   2) Hussain may have tried to board a Northern Line train.
   3) Khan takes a westbound Circle Line train.
   4) Lindsay takes a southbound Piccadilly Line train
**8:50 am** – Tanweer, Khan, and Lindsay detonate their bombs.
Hussein eventually takes a No. 30 bus towards the Marble Arch.
**9:47 am** – Hussein detonates his bomb in Tavistock Square.

## Appendix II – Effects of the July 7<sup>th</sup>, Attacks

52 people killed
4 suicide bombers die
700 + injured
12,500 statements taken by the police
26,000 exhibits of which 5,000 were scientifically examined
142 computers seized
6,000 hours of closed-circuit television camera footage
8000 pounds for the operation
1 reconaissance trip to London
3 visits to Pakistan
2 bombers went to university
2 bombers were married
Source: *The Times*, May 12, 2006