

## A second look at Jihad and Terrorism

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There is a lot of talk lately about jihad juxtaposed with terrorism. It is unfortunate that the topic has even emerged, but it is certainly a reasonable question and deserves a just and honest response.

Jihad is an arabic word that comes from the root jahada meaning "to struggle." It can refer to various types of struggle: physical, psychological, spiritual, and even financial. In the case of the Qur'an, it is used to mean all of these forms in various places.

For example:

O you who believe! Do your duty to Allah, seek the means of approach unto Him, and strive (jaahidu) in His way: that you may be successful. (3:35)

and

And We shall try you until We test those among you who strive (al-mujtahidina) their utmost and persevere in patience; and We shall try your reported (mettle). (47:31)

The Prophetic tradition (Sunnah), which is the second source of Islam after the Qur'an further illustrates the importance of inner-struggle or jihad-un-nafs over that of outward struggle.

Al-Sukuni relates on the authority of Abu `Abd Allah al-Sadiq (A): `Verily on seeing the returning armies from the battlefield, the Prophet (S) of God said: Blessed are those who have performed the minor jihad (jihad al-asghar), and have yet to perform the major one. When asked, what is the major jihad (jihad al-akbar)? the Prophet replied, "the jihad of the self" (struggle against self) (recorded by Al-Kulayni in al-Kafi)

Those who wish to eliminate Islam, however, has striven in their own jihad to isolate the minor jihad of Islam and superimpose the anomaly of terrorism in its place. There is no doubt that some ill-minded Muslims have used corrupt interpretations of Qur'an and Sunnah to justify terrorism, but this is a recent phenomenon that does not extend its reach into the classical Islamic tradition. What those who seek to discredit Islam have attempted to do is to align current unIslamic terrorism with legitimate and lawful warfare of Islam's past.

To gain a better understanding of this dilemma, we must first understand some of the rules of Jihad, as explained in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

1. All enemies in war must be active combatants.

In other words, if a person or group of people are not engaged in fighting a Muslim, then a Muslim cannot fight them. Anyone who is a non-combatant (women, children, non-fighting men, animals, trees, etc.) is safe from the Muslims in all times.

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loves not transgressors. (2:190)

2. Accidental killing is not excused in Islam.

There must be careful consideration as to whether an action will cause the loss of innocent life. (This is much different from the western concept of "collateral damage" where bombs are dropped, knowing that many innocent people will be killed). Therefore, nuclear and biological weapons are not allowed Islam because of the risk that innocent people will be hurt.

O

ye who believe! When you go abroad in the cause of Allah, investigate carefully, and say not to any one who offers you a salutation: "You are not a believer!" Coveting the perishable goods of this life: with Allah are profits and spoils abundant. Even thus were you yourselves before, till Allah conferred on you His favours: Therefore carefully investigate. For Allah is well aware of all that you do. (4:94)

3. All other avenues must be extinguished before fighting is commenced.

Peace and Justice must be the ultimate goals. Here it should be noted that the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) spent the first 55 years of his life without going to war. His prophetic mission began at age 40, and for the first 13 years in Makkah, he did not fight. During that time, he and his followers were subjected to ridicule and abuse.

The Prophet sometimes had entrails of animals thrown on him while he prayed. His followers were tortured and killed (the first martyr of Islam was an innocent woman named Sumayah). Bilal, then a slave of a wealthy Arab, was subjected to the cruelty of heavy stones placed on his chest because he would not recant his belief. He was saved and freed by Abu Bakr, a companion of the Prophet. The Prophet finally had to send the weakest of his followers to Abyssinia where they would be safe.

Then, the Arab tribe Quraysh decided to expel the Prophet and his family from Makkah. They were forced to live in the open desert under the burning sun, during which time, the Prophet's wife, Khadijah and his uncle Abu Talib, died. Still, the Prophet did not order his people to fight. He could have. They were a minority, but they could have engaged in secret assassinations, suicide attacks, etc, but the Prophet hated war and killing and wanted to exhaust every possibility before going there.

Also, there was no point to such resistance unless he had a proper army and could ensure that his people had learned enough about Islam so as not to do injustice to their enemies.

Finally, after the Prophet had made a deal to move his followers to Madinah and establish a new city with alliances and strength, the Quraysh decided to kill him. They sent men in the night to kill the Prophet, but Allah gave him a vision of this. So, Ali, the Prophet's young brave cousin laid himself in the prophet's bed awaiting the attackers. Upon seeing the brave and willing Ali instead of their intended target, they relented and instead went out in search of the Prophet.

He escaped, but the persecution did not end there. After most of the Muslims and their Prophet were safe in Madinah, the Quraysh began a campaign of thievery and oppression that were the precursors to war. Some Muslims were left behind in Makkah, especially women who were essentially imprisoned by their tribes. Many were separated from their husbands and families. The Quraysh also stole the homes and valuables that the Muslims left behind.

Muslims began to raid caravans, not to steal from the Quraysh, as stealing is not allowed in Islam, even if your enemy steals from you. And evidence shows that the Muslims did not loot and plunder these caravans. Instead they used a brilliant stratagem of war. The Qurayshi strength was in their economy, which depended on the trade route to Syria. The Muslims successfully cut off this route, which eventually led to the Battle of Badr.

Please keep in mind that these battles between the Muslims and Quraysh pale in comparison to modern day battles. In the battle of Badr, for example, approximately 16 Muslims and 55 Quraysh were killed. None of the dead were innocent civilians, unlike today's wars where the majority of dead are innocent people. Hundreds of thousands of innocents died in Hiroshima and Nagasaki alone because of the atom bomb dropped by the United States.

These concepts of "suicide bombing" and killing of innocents are not Islamic inventions. They are unislamic tactics that Muslims learned from secular war theories. Muslim terrorists today are more influenced by Stalin and Mao than by Muhammad and Ali.

It is related that Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him, was once engaged on the battle field with one of the top Qurayshi warriors, who had been boasting that no one could defeat him. Ali, who was known as the best warrior among the Muslims, answered the call. After much fighting, Ali subdued his opponent and struck him to the ground. His opponent then spat in the face of Ali. Suddenly, Imam Ali turned and walked away. The man was shocked and demanded to know why Ali did not finish him. Imam Ali said

what became famous words:

"Know, O Amr, I only kill in the way of Allah and not for any private motive. Since you spat in my face, my killing you now may be from a desire for personal vengeance. So I spare your life. Rise and return to your people!"

So, how, following Imam Ali's example, can Muslims justify killing innocents when Imam Ali would not even kill a sworn enemy of the Muslims who was laying helplessly on the ground and had spat in his face?

One could make the argument that later Muslim civilizations such as the Ottomans committed atrocities and injustices against non-Muslims. In some cases, this is true, but these empires did not represent Islam. Many of them committed far worse crimes against Muslims, especially the Umayyad and Abbassid regimes. The same oppressive history has repeated itself today, where the majority of dead are Muslims and the blood that is shed is Muslim blood.

No terrorist can claim Islam in one hand and kill Muslims with the other. Such a person is a hypocrite.

"The Hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire: no helper will you find for them" (4:145)

No terrorist can claim to stand for justice, no matter how noble the cause, and kill children. Prophet Muhammad used to seek out the children and ask them to pray for him because he knew that the supplications of children were the purest on earth. Now imagine a child who supplicates to Allah to relieve her from the suffering inflicted upon her by a terrorist.

Those who now seek to defame Islam live by the same principles as the terrorists. They operate on an understanding of absolutes, "Either you are with us, or you're against us." It does not matter to some people that you are peace-loving and compassionate if you wear the title of "Muslim". You are an enemy, and they will seek to distort your religion to make you appear as though such horrific evil is justified.

"That is because they hate what Allah has revealed; so He has made their deeds fruitless." (47:9)

Nevertheless, let truth stand clear from falsehood. Let the true nature and love of Islam permeate throughout the world. Let all peace-loving and God-fearing people, regardless of their religions, stand united in the cause of justice and tranquility. Let every Muslim lend a hand to every

suffering person around the world, and let the world see her plight through the eyes of a Muslim child.

"It

is not righteousness that you turn your faces Towards east or West; but it is righteousness- to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which you have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah-fearing." (2:177)