



Demystifying *Jihad*

ICSSA

Occasional Paper

May 18, 2004

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This paper deconstructs the myth of Jihad as it is presented by the mainstream media. Many learned people have come to believe that Jihad is a form of terrorism or its concept incites terrorism.

THE INDEPENDENT CENTRE
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES AND ANALYSIS



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Demystifying Jihad

What do you really need to know to deconstruct the myth of Jihadism and Jihadists.

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s *Jihad* all that Daniel Pipes describes in 719 words article, What is Jihad.¹ Unfortunately, it is only a good summary of what *Jihad* means to many among masses and a majority among the learned and experienced government officials in Europe and America.

Similarly, almost all those who label themselves as liberal, moderate or progressive Muslims believe such description of *Jihad* is more or less true.

Together they have twisted the concept of *Jihad* to the extent that any reference to it in an article can land a Muslim writer into serious trouble with the law enforcement or security agencies due to the mind-set they have developed on the basis of some false truths about *Jihad*.

Any person's giving a reference to application of *Jihad* in his speech or writing means the person is holding extreme militant views and so consumed with hate that he is capable of offering his own children as sacrifices to the cause - that being the death and destruction of the Western World.

Despite many misconceptions, a vast majority of Muslims look at *Jihad* from a very different perspective than non-Muslims. Muslims feel demoralized by the grossly unfair portrayal of *Jihad* as a concept of indiscriminate killing of non-believers.

Washington Time's May 15 editorial may not consider such negative portrayal of the concepts of Islam as hate crime, but Muslims do feel disgusted by the daily dose of anti-*Jihad* hate that fills TV screen, the newspapers and the air waves that surround them.

It is astonishing to note that the same propagandists still believe that the U.S. policy objectives were worth the sacrifice of half a million Iraqi children and 1.7 to 2 million Iraqis in total; that the war on Iraq was justified, that the deaths of over 13,000 civilians are no big deal, that the torture of Iraqi prisoners is little more than "hazing," that 36 years of Israeli occupation was the only way to curb "Arab violence."

Those who have developed an anti-Islam mindset absorb these ugly facts without being moved because they turn away and

pretend nothing is going on. They allow Pipes and Friedman to give us the simple false truths: there are good guys — Israelis and Americans — and there are bad guys who are always Muslims.

This simple racist approach exonerates the majority of people from having to understand the simple and straightforward basic concepts of Islam.

Those who associate *Jihad*, for example, with violence and a threat to peace and security do not know the real position of *Jihad* in the overall context of Islamic teachings. The perverted concept of *Jihad* has been limited and made synonymous with the concept of war. *Jihad* is absolutely not war. Qur'an uses the term *Qital* for war at numerous places.

For example, after chastising Muslims for not doing what they say, Allah says regarding *Qital*: "Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall."²

It shows that *Jihad* is a much broad category which includes many aspect of Deen, as mentioned in the following text, whereas *Qital* is climax of struggle in the cause of Allah after fulfilling many pre-requisites.

This is the highest virtue, *summum bonum*, of the moral ideology/thought of Islam. The highest value of goodness in Islam is defined in these words of the Qur'an: "[those who are]... *the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts— these are they who are true (to themselves) and these are they who guard (against evil).*"³

Qital is an ultimate form of *Jihad* that becomes legitimate after a people's passing through so many initial stages and pre-requisites, but making it synonymous with *Jihad* reduces the scope of *Jihad*.

As a result, irrespective of the intentions of the combatants, every Muslim war is labeled as *Jihad*. Even massacres by oppressive rulers to strengthen their rule were dubbed as *Jihad*.

Qur'anic language is very scientific in nature. Most of the words have a three-letter root which reflects in all derivatives of these words.

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Whosoever understood the reality of the creation of the universe; recognized Allah and accepted Him, he has to strive in the cause of Allah with all available means at his/her disposal.

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Root of the word *Jihad* is *Jehud* — to exert ones utmost. Struggle to achieve any objective is *Jehud*. However this *Jehud* is one sided, uni-directional personal effort of an individual to achieve an objective.

When *Jehud* is converted into *Mujahida* or *Jihad*, we see an additional meaning there in, which means that the effort is not a one sided attempt by a single party. *Mujahida* or *Jihad* becomes a multi-sided struggle in which every side struggles to achieve its own objective and make its thought reign supreme.

Jihad fi sabeel-lillah — *Jihad* in the cause of Allah — is an important concept of the Qur'an. Proper translation of *Jihad*, in the Qur'anic sense, is to strive hard. *Jehud* is only a one sided attempt, whereas striving and struggling means determination to achieve the objective despite all odds and oppositions.

When it comes to struggle for any objective, one has to invest his energies, abilities and resources into it. When it comes to projection and propagation of an ideology, it needs physical and financial resources. Therefore, the Qur'an refers two words: wealth and lives (souls), when it discusses the concept of *Jihad*.

Another pre-requisite is setting the objective for *Jihad*. Since day one, a never ending struggle keeps on going among human beings in every sphere of life - — for self promotion, financial and material advancement, personal achievements, national causes, national honor, personal or national ideologies, or supremacy of different systems and ideologies. All this comes under struggle, *Jihad*, for existence.

The Qur'an uses the word *Jihad* even for the struggle of parents who prevent their children from accepting the Truth (31:15). It shows that it is not only Muslims who get engaged in *Jihad*. This broad term is, in fact, one of the basic principles of life.

Same is the case with someone's setting patriotic and loyal devotion to the supremacy of his nation, the honor of his country, or the spreading an ideology or a way of life as his objectives.

A struggle is underway among nations for the same objectives and all energies and resources are spent to be one of the leading country, nation and follower of the most valid ideology. This is *Jihad* in the cause of one's country, nation or ideology

one believes. The Qur'an stresses on *Jihad* in the cause of Allah alone (49:15).

It is a basic pre-requisite for men of character that if they have an idea, and they consider to have finally reached the Truth, and their hearts testify to the validity of this idea, they would strive to spread it for the well being of others and the society as a whole. They he would use all his abilities, time and energy to achieve this objective. He would not hesitate to sacrifice anything in the cause they believe is just.

The smallest but most potent chapters of the Qur'an explains the most important and inter-related issues in this respect. It says: *"I swear by the time, Most surely man is in loss, Except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience."*⁴

It is very logical that a man behaves in this fashion in every aspect of life: First he has to look and find out the Truth, the just and right point of view.

Secondly, he has to accept the Truth when he finds it. Thirdly, he has to strive to propagate the Truth and say what he believes is just and right. Lastly, he has to bear all problems he may face while upholding the Truth.

From Islamic point of view, the best title for all these factors collected together would be *"Jihad in the cause of Allah."* Whosoever understood the reality of the creation of the universe; recognized Allah and accepted Him, he has to strive in the cause of Allah with all available means at his/her disposal.

From here on we have to see the basic steps and the ultimate destination of *Jihad* in the cause of Allah.

Starting point of Jihad in the Cause of Allah: Jihad against one's self.

When a man's belief in Allah, His Prophets, His books, the Day of Judgment and the life after death is not a mere dogma or a racial creed and he is truly illuminated from within, he is bound to go through a struggle.

This struggle or resistance is a natural product of the clash between his powerful animal instincts of the baser-self to which the Qur'an refers as *nafsul-ammara*, and the modern researchers, such as Sigmund Freud, as Libido or ID.

Jihad against one's inner-self — the baser-instincts — is like a root. If this root is tightly held deep inside the human personality, the plant over it will thrive and flourish.

These blind instincts force human beings to ignore the distinction between good and bad, right and wrong, moral and immoral, etc. They need satisfaction at all costs. However, if one has believed in the Truth, he has to respect the laws of Allah and limits set by Him. One of the pre-requisites of belief in the Truth is to "obey Allah, and obey His Messenger."⁵

Believers are warned not to put themselves "forward before Allah and his Messenger."⁶ "...These are the limits of Allah, so do not go near them,"⁷ and "whoever exceeds the limits of Allah these it is that are the unjust."⁸

It shows that the internal resistance and struggles begins the moment one realizes and accepts the ultimate Truth from his heart. As long as belief in the Truth is limited to one's tongue, no internal resistance takes place.

That's why the Qur'an says: "O you who believe! why do you say that which you do not do?"⁹ "Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allah that you say that which you do not do."¹⁰

Internal resistance takes place when baser-self demands one thing and the laws of Allah demands another. That is why when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was asked about the best form of *Jihad*, he replied "*an-tujahida nafsaka fi ta'athillah*" — it is a struggle with yourself to make it obedient to Allah. This is the starting point of *Jihad*.

The opposite of it in Islam is *Shirk*.¹¹ Qur'an considers one who obeys his baser-instincts as the one who has taken it for god other than Allah: "Have you seen him who takes his low desires for his god?"¹² Those who set out on a war with enemies outside without winning a war with the enemy within end up as self-deluded losers.

Jihad against one's inner-self — the baser-instincts — is like a root. If this root is tightly held deep inside the human personality, the plant over it will thrive and flourish. If the root lacks depth and thoroughness, any temptation or difficulty in life would easily blow away the needed resistance for overcoming baser instincts.

Second stage of *Jihad* in the Cause of Allah

The struggle within leads to the struggle against the enemies of Truth and

justice outside. The first stage of this struggle is invitation to and propagation of the Truth. This is very logical from the perspective of human decency to spread what one considers in the benefit of humanity. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself." [Sahih Bukhari Vol 1: #12]

First target: invitation to the Truth

This is actually the first step towards inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong.¹³ The third objective is *al-nahy 'an al-munkar*, to "forbid the wrong." The modern day concepts of freedom have made Muslims forget about this aspect of forbidding the wrong altogether.

Some Muslims consider themselves free, based on the argument that there is no compulsion in religion and we have the right to interpret, reinterpret and if necessary invent in the light of human agency.

Despite their much-vaunted philosophy, the neo-mods of Islam have yet to come up with an answer to the clear orders from Allah for both enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong at least nine times in the Qur'an.¹⁴

To spread the Truth and invite people to the straight path one has to work in a way the Qur'an describes in the prayers of Prophet Noah. He said:

*"O my Lord! I have called to my People night and day: "But my call only increases (their) flight (from the Right). And every time I have called to them, that Thou mightest forgive them, they have (only) thrust their fingers into their ears, covered themselves up with their garments, grown obstinate, and given themselves up to arrogance. So I have called to them aloud; Further I have spoken to them in public and secretly in private."*¹⁵

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The truth of the Truth is that on Allah's earth, only His command should reign supreme and has the right to prevail.

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This invitation to the Truth is thus the first step towards external Jihad. We must keep in mind that war (*Qital*) came in the life of Prophet Muhammad 15 years of starting invitation to the Truth in which he went through the many pains along with his fellow believers.

The Qur'an refers to it in the following words: "*Those who have left their homes, or been driven out therefrom, or suffered harm in My Cause, or fought or been slain...*"¹⁶ The stage of *Qital* came two years after Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) migration to Mecca and transforming his companions into the best form of human beings through *Jihad* against the baser-self.

Objectives of invitation: Discharging responsibility

The basic objective of *Mujahida* in the cause of Allah is to discharge the responsibility of delivering the message of Allah and inviting human kind to the Truth. This way, they would not be able to pretend that no one informed them about the Truth or they had no access to the Truth.

According to the Qur'an, this has been the main objective of the Messengers of Allah coming to the mankind:

*And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline). He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion; it is the cult of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this (Revelation); that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and ye be witnesses for mankind! So establish regular Prayer, give regular Charity, and hold fast to Allah! He is your Protector – the Best to protect and the Best to help!*¹⁷

Of course, this needs commitment, devotion and total dedication to discharge the responsibility

of conveying the Truth to the humankind and this is the first step towards *Mujahida* in the cause of Allah.

The final target of *Mujahida* in the cause of Allah

What we need to understand is that the Truth of the Truth is that on Allah's earth, only His command should reign supreme and has the right to prevail. In Qur'anic words: "...Verily the '*Hukm*' (command, Judgment) is for none but Allah..." [Al-Qur'an 12:40]. This verse states that the privilege of rule is reserved for Allah alone.

Hukum is a legal judgment. The *Hukum* is to pass judgment, issue a verdict, or a sentence. Allah has ordered the Prophet to rule between Muslims by that which He revealed to him and has obliged Muslims to restrict themselves to all the rules of the *Shari'ah*.

An order of Allah to the Prophet is an order to the entire *Ummah*, unless there is evidence which limits the order to him. In this case there is no such evidence, so the order to rule by all that Allah has revealed is binding for all the Muslims.

"And rule between them by that which Allah revealed to you, and do not follow their vain desires away from the truth which came to you". [Al-Qur'an 5:48]

Because the word *Ma* (what) is general in its meaning, it signifies that the order refers to all of the aspects of governing that have been revealed, and not merely a part of it. This order to the prophet has been given in a decisive manner, and does not leave room for doubt or alternative meanings or understandings.

If we have a look at the global order today, the situation is totally different that what is prescribed for the human beings. Therefore, establishing this Truth needs extra effort. If someone is preaching or propagating something that does not challenge the status quo or individual interests, no one will raise questions.

If invitation to the Truth undermines vested interests, a bitter resistance is inevitable. There was resistance to Prophet Muhammad's efforts in Mecca as well, but the situation got worse when believers of the Truth came out and declared that they

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were not only preachers but also to establish the *Hukum* of Allah in His land.

They were not there to give sermons on justice and fairness. They had to establish justice. This is what Allah told Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to say: "...I am commanded to judge justly between you." ¹⁸

This is not about introduction and description of a system, but it is about establishing a just order. In this struggle, tough resistance is inevitable because those in power would never let loose sight of their vested interests. At this stage resistance will touch the climax.

Last stage of *Jihad* in the cause of Allah: Qital in the cause of Allah

This is the stage to which Qur'an has referred "*Allah will complete [the revelation of] His Light, even though the Unbelievers may detest.*" ¹⁹

At another place, the Qur'an repeats the same message with a negative stress: "They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah *will not allow* but that His light should be perfected, even though the Unbelievers may detest [it]." ²⁰

Scholars unanimously agree that completing and perfecting His light means completing *Deen-i-Ilahi* (the *Deen* of Allah), which is also the main objective of the coming of the last Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). ²¹

The problem is that all the steps from accepting the Truth from the core of one's heart, to the propagation of the Truth and establishment of the Truth and just order have been ignored. On the one hand, *Jihad* has been declared as synonymous with war and on the other every Muslim war and struggle has been declared as *Jihad*.

Muslims have played an equal role in confusing the concept of *Jihad* and degrading its sacredness. Above all, some have declared that *Jihad* is not *Fard-e-Ayn* (compulsory duty) but *Fard-e-Kifaya* (It is the obligation that if performed by some, the obligation falls from the rest).

He we must keep in mind that the Qur'anic injunctions about

Jihad do not mean that Muslims are to drop everything and needlessly engage in fighting with non-Muslims. The objective is very clearly mentioned in verse 9 and 10 or Chapter 61 (Al-Saff) before the command of *Jihad* in verse 11. ²²

Similarly, Allah says, "*only those are believers,*" who fulfill the following two conditions: "[1] *have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted,*... [2] *have striven with their belongings and their persons in the Cause of Allah: Such are the sincere ones.*" ²³

Having said this, *Jihad* is not limited or an isolated concept of war. Besides the afore-mentioned preconditions of accepting the Truth from the core of one's heart and then living by Islam, there are conditional and unconditional verses about *Jihad*. According to scholars of Islam, if there are similar verses that are conditional, the unconditional verses must be interpreted as being conditional.

For example verse 9:29 says: "*And Fight those who have not faith in God, nor in the Hereafter, and (who) forbid not what God and His Prophet have forbidden and (who) are not committed to the religion of truth, of those who have been brought the Book, until they pay tribute by hand, and they are the low.*" (9:29)

In another verse, we are told: "Fight in the way of God those who fight you." (2:190). It shows that Muslims need not fight people of other faiths regardless of whether they attack Muslims or if they are guilty of aggression or not.

There are some conditions for the legality of *Jihad*. Amongst them, for example, are the following:

- the other side intends to attack Muslims;
- it creates a barrier against the call of Islam, meaning that it negates the freedom of that call and becomes an obstacle to its diffusion, while Islam says that those barriers are to be removed.

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As far supporting occupations in the name of freedom and democracy is concerned, which aggression and occupation in history is done in the name of aggression?

In the name of peace, submission is demanded. In such an event, we cannot say that because we are the advocates of peace, we are opposed to war. Such a thing would mean that we are advocates of misery; supporters of occupations and advocates of surrender. The meaning of peace is honorable coexistence with others, but surrender is not honorable coexistence; it is coexistence that on one side is absolutely dishonorable.

Or, likewise, in the case of a people subject to the oppression and tyranny of a group from amongst themselves, Islam says that we must fight those tyrants so as to deliver the oppressed from the claws of tyranny. This has been expressed in the Qur'an thus: "Why is it that you do not fight in the way of God and the way of the deprived (*mustazafin*)?" (4:75)

Demonizing Jihad

Rancid notions such as Jihadism and Jihadists are now widely used to demonize the concept of *Jihad*. Some neo-mods of Islam have jumped on the bandwagon and accepted the views that there should be no *Jihad* at all. Only an Islamic state can declare *Jihad* and since there is no true Islamic state, the concept as a whole is redundant.

The US is allowed to occupy country after country on the basis of the doctrine of pre-emption and self-defense. Similarly, it is all legal for Israel to keep Arab land occupied in the name of security. However, it is argued that why the concept of *Jihad* exists in Islam.

They state that due to this legal permission, Muslims started wars with various peoples, forcibly imposing Islam on them. It is due to this permission that Muslims imposed Islam by force. They say that the principle of *Jihad* in Islam and one of the basic rights of man — freedom of belief — are in eternal conflict.

It seems it has come to this that war is always bad for Muslims, whether in defense of a right or against oppression.

For Muslims the conditions and motives of war have become irrelevant. Even self-defense for them has become aggression. In this age, *Jihad* has become a curse simply for the fear that it intensifies resistance to occupations and global domination.

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The meaning of peace is honorable coexistence with others, but surrender is not honorable coexistence; it is coexistence that on one side is absolutely dishonorable. Pakistan is a prominent example of double dishonor. On the one side is the dishonor of aggression and on the other the dishonor of surrender in the face of *zulm* — injustice and oppression.

As far supporting occupations in the name of freedom and democracy is concerned, which aggression and occupation in history is done in the name of aggression? Every aggression has always been dressed up by the aggressor in nice words and presentable labels.

When Napoleon first came to Cairo, he first tried the American trick to make an invasion look like a liberation. In a pamphlet distributed in Alexandria one day before the city fell into the hand of French troops, Napoleon's translators introduced the expression "*al-Umma al-Misriyya*" (the Egyptian community or nation) for the first time to the Arabic language.

Napoleon claimed to be liberating the Egyptians from the Mamlouks, who were foreigners; he was a savior rather than an invader.

Of course, to the people of Cairo, the Mamlouks and the Ottomans were no foreigners; Islam, not nationalism, was the basis of political identity. "*Al-Umma al-Islamiyya*" (the Islamic community, sometimes translated as the Islamic nation) was the only *Ummah* around, especially when it came to dealing with Europe.

In his meeting with the notables of Cairo and the sheikhs of Al-Azhar University in July 1798 he claimed to be a Muslim himself.

The officers of the French Army were ordered not to attack women, not to drink wine in public and not to enter mosques. He appointed a ruling council, just like the one Paul Bremer has composed in Iraq. Fourteen sheikhs of Al-Azhar University were now the administrative government of Egypt under French occupation.

Their decrees all started by declaring that there was no God but God and that Mohammed was His Prophet. He even made this council of 14 issue a fatwa (a religious edict) stating that Napoleon was the awaited Mahdi, a religious figure, whose appearance, Muslims believe, would fill the

To address anti-Jihad elements, the Qur'an comes with a universal message in the concluding verses of Chapter Al-Hajj, addressing the human kind in general and Muslims in particulars.

land with justice just as it has been filled with oppression. They claimed that 20 verses of the Qur'an implicitly referred to Napoleon.²⁴

It did not take the Egyptians long to respond to the kind of nonsense that is revisited upon us by the neo-mods of Islam and those who curse the concept of *Jihad*. After a couple of months, Cairo was burning under the feet of the French.

The younger sheikhs of Al-Azhar declared *Jihad*, complaining that the clerics who supported Napoleon had become French and therefore ceased to be Muslims (a move that proved very effective in convincing many of the 14 sheikhs to rethink their political alliances, and join the revolt).

The invaders were invaders after all, and they had no right to rule over Muslims, this was a new crusade, and Napoleon, despite his continuous declarations, was no different the Louis IX, and he deserved no better a destiny (Louis IX was locked in a judge's house and hit with a thick stick everyday until he was returned to France on ransom).

Thus, there are two types of anti-*Jihad* elements: One amongst Muslims who want to maintain status quo and reap the fruits of their opportunism and who truly believe, like General Musharraf of Pakistan, that any resistance to aggression is suicide.

The second element is the anti-*Jihad* propagandists who claim that religion must always oppose war, and advocate peace are either mistaken or do it purposely to avoid the fate of Napoleon, Louis IX and many such aggressor in history.

Religion must of course advocate peace, and the Qur'an says: "*Was-Solho khayron*," — *Peace is better* — but it must also advocate war.

If the opposing side is not ready to coexist honorably, for example, and being oppressive it intends to trample upon human dignity and honor, and we do submit, then we have welcomed misery: we have accepted dishonor. Islam says: "Peace if the other side is ready and willing to accept it. If not, and it turns to war: then war."

Qur'an's Universal Message

To address the two anti-*Jihad* elements, Qur'an comes with a universal message in the concluding verses of Chapter Al-Hajj. The first four verses

address the human kind in general and the last two address the believers.

In the address to humankind, Allah says:

O men! Here is a parable set forth! listen to it! Those on whom, besides Allah, ye call, cannot create (even) a fly, if they all met together for the purpose! and if the fly should snatch away anything from them, they would have no power to release it from the fly. Feeble are those who petition and those whom they petition! No just estimate have they made of Allah: for Allah is He Who is strong and able to Carry out His Will. Allah chooses messengers from angels and from men for Allah is He Who hears and sees (all things). He knows what is before them and what is behind them: and to Allah go back all questions (for decision).²⁵

Allah addresses everyone, believers and non-believers, in the words: "O men." It is a call to those who are afraid of the super powers of their age; who call people in power, such as Bush and Blair, for help; and those who rely on other false gods. Imagine the parable. Allah says, those on whom you call besides Allah, cannot create a fly, even though they combine together for the purpose. And if the fly snatches away a thing from them, they will have no power to release it from the fly irrespective of the unimaginable economic, technological and military power at their disposal. So weak are the seeker and the sought.

Here imagine General Musharraf's logic that not assist Bush in occupation of Afghanistan would lead to punishment of Pakistan as well, a kind of seeking refuge in pleasing a tyrant, forgetting the above mentioned verses.

Subsequent dishonor and deaths at the hands of each other had to come and it came: Wana operation in Pakistan is just one of the results. These are the results of their not regarding Allah with His rightful esteem; meaning, they have not recognized the might and power of Allah when they bow alongside Him to those who cannot even

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These verses from the Holy Qur'an present four basic requirements which the believers must fulfill.

A full understanding of the requirements of a Muslim leads us to the conclusion that Jihad is not a vague, detached or isolated concept of needless war and violence. Islam does not give permission to go to war based on conjecture, vengeance, lies and deception as we witness in the present day world. Nor is war, killings and victory on earth the ultimate objectives..

ward off a fly, because they are so weak and incapable.

The last two verses of Chapter Hajj are specifically directed at the believers in Allah, his Prophets, Books, angels and the Day of Judgment. Here the Qur'an explains what is required of the believers and it is an answer to those who demonize the concept of Jihad:

O ye who believe! bow down, prostrate yourselves, and adore your Lord; and do good; that ye may prosper. And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline). He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion; it is the faith of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this (Revelation); that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and ye be witnesses for mankind! So establish regular Prayer, give regular Charity, and hold fast to Allah! He is your Protector - the Best to protect and the Best to help! ²⁶

These verses present **four requirements** which the believers must fulfill:

- 1) Observing and practicing the fundamental pillars of Islam (*Furoo-ad-Deen*) starting with establishing regular prayers.
- 2) Worshiping their Lord. It shows that only prayers and fasting is not enough. Fully worshiping Allah in all walks of life is required. Believers should not discriminate in what Allah commands them to do, i.e., to accept some and reject other.
- 3) Doing good, serving the humanity. This command has two aspects: one is to help and take care of the needy, poor, orphans, sick, homeless, widows, helpless, etc as explained in verse 2:177.²⁷ This is temporary service. The second and the most advance form of serving the humanity is to help them follow, what the Qur'an calls, "The Straight Way." The objective is to save them from the hell fire. At another place, Allah says: "O you

who believe! save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones..."²⁸

- 4) The fourth requirement is *Jihad* in the cause of Allah. It is important to note that in the earlier, interlinked verses, Allah says, they did not do a "*just estimate*" of Allah, as they were supposed to estimate. Here Allah says: "*Strive in Allah's cause as you ought to strive.*" The first is the essence of faith and belief i.e., understanding Allah. The second is ultimate aim, the pinnacle of human deeds and struggle, i.e., *Jihad* in the cause of Allah. Human being consumes their health, wealth, lives, all other resources and capabilities in different causes such as for their kids, for their nation, for their country, for fame, etc. This verses challenges: Isn't it Allah whose pleasure deserves your striving? Is not he who has the best reward for your investment?

A full understanding of the requirements of a Muslim leads us to the conclusion that *Jihad* is not a vague, detached or isolated concept of needless war and violence. Islam does not give permission to go to war based on conjecture, vengeance, lies and deception as we witness in the present day world. Nor is war, killings and victory on earth the ultimate objectives. The first verses of the Qur'an about *Jihad* are:

"Surely Allah will defend those who believe; surely Allah does not love any one who is unfaithful, ungrateful. Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them. Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah. And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered; and surely

What we have learnt so far is that the Qur'an has fundamentally defined Jihad not as a war of aggression or of superiority or of authority, but of resistance against aggression.

Allah will help him who helps His cause; most surely Allah is Strong, Mighty. Those who, should We establish them in the land, will keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and enjoin good and forbid evil; and Allah's is the end of affairs."²⁹

These are amazing verses. They are the very first revealed Qur'anic verses concerning the legislation of *Jihad*.

As mentioned earlier, during the first year after migration to Madina, permission for defense was still not given. It was during the second year of the *hijrah* (migration) that the first verses on *Jihad* were revealed. The tone of the verse goes thus: *"Truly Allah defends those who believe... surely Allah does not love any one who is unfaithful, ungrateful."* This indicates that the Maccans had transgressed against Muslims, and had rejected Allah's blessing upon themselves. Then it declares: *"Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed."*

Permission to fight has been given to those whom others have come to fight. Which means: *"O Muslims, now that the polytheist rejecters have come to fight against you, fight them."* In reality this is a state of defense. This permission is given so that the oppressed must defend themselves. Then comes a promise of help: *"and most surely Allah is well able to assist them; those who have been expelled from their homes for no reason except for their saying: 'Our Nourisher is Allah.'"*

The Qur'an is amazing in the way it discloses realities and brings to mind all details. Here comes a particular verse. The Qur'an tells Muslims: No. If the other side becomes aggressive towards them and they do not defend themselves, not a stone will be left upon a stone.

All the houses of worship will be destroyed: *"And if Allah did not prevent people, some with some (others) then truly cloisters, churches, synagogues and mosques - in which the Name of Allah is oft brought to mind would have been destroyed."*

If Allah did not check the aggression of some people by means of others, all the houses of worship of all the different sects and religions would be destroyed. The churches of Christians, the synagogues of Jews, the monasteries, the mosques, places

of prostration of Muslims, all would exist no longer. Some people would commit such aggression that no one would find the freedom in which to worship.

The Qur'an then makes a promise of help: *"And Allah will help whoever helps Him - Truly Allah is Powerful, Prevailing."* Whoever helps Allah, meaning whoever helps the Truth and justice will be helped by Allah, and Allah is Powerful and ever the Victor.

Now notice how Allah describes those He helps. All helps those who defend themselves, the people who, when they establish a government, form one on these lines: *"Those who, if we settle them in the earth, ..."* The people who, when Allah gives them a place to inhabit and sets up a government for them, the people who, when Allah gives them power and authority, form a state on these lines: *"... establish prayer, pay Zakah, and command to what is recognized and forbid what is rejected..."*

Prayer is the correct spiritual bond between man and Allah, and Zakah is the correct spiritual bond of cooperation between individuals. The people who worship Allah in sincerity and help one another; who consider themselves as being under an obligation to promote what is good and to combat what is evil.

What we have learnt so far is that the Qur'an has fundamentally defined *Jihad* not as a war of aggression or of superiority or of authority, but of resistance against aggression.

Of course, the forms of aggression to be resisted are not always on the lines of one party invading the territory of another. Perhaps a form of aggression will be on the lines of the other side in its own territory subjecting to torture and tyranny a group from amongst themselves, a group that is weak and powerless, who, in the terms of the Qur'an, are called *mustazafin*.

In such conditions Muslims cannot remain indifferently aloof, believing, for example, to Palestinians their state of affairs to be ours - or like Musharraf that we are not *Tekadar* (contractors) of Islam.

Muslims have a mandate to free such afflicted people. Or perhaps the other side has created such a terrible state of repression that the call to the Truth, love and justice is not allowed to flourish. All these are types of transgressions. In all these conditions physical *Jihad* becomes an

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The circumstances in which verse 2:55 of the Qur'an was revealed is enough to contradict Jihad-bashers.

It means Muslims have the obligation to explain clearly the right path to people.

However, no one must be obliged to accept the religion of Islam, let alone imposing it on others by force, like the US imposing democracy through taking lives of thousands of people and humiliating a nation to the possible extent.

urgent necessity; and such a *Jihad* is in defense, in resistance against injustice, oppression and transgression.

Deliberate confusion

Some political analysts are deliberately confusing the concept of *Jihad* and present it a totalitarian concept of some "terrorists" who want to dominate the world and impose Islamic System on the US and its allies in particular.

In the Qur'an we have a group of verses which specify that religion is to be accepted freely and cannot be forced upon someone and this confirms that in Islam no one can be coerced, be told either to become Muslims or die. These verses illuminate those unconditional verses in a different way.

Verse 2:255 is well-known in this regard: "*La ikraha fid-din. Qat-tabayanar-rushdo min al-ghayy,*" meaning "*There is no compulsion in religion, for the truth has been made manifest from the false.*"

It means Muslims have the obligation to explain clearly the right path to people. However, no one must be obliged to accept the religion of Islam, let alone imposing it on others by force, like the US imposing democracy through taking lives of thousands of people and humiliating a nation to the possible extent.

The circumstances in which the above mentioned verse was revealed is enough to contradict *Jihad*-bashers.

Although the religion of the Aws and Khazraj tribes was different from that of the Jews, they, nevertheless, would sometimes send their children to the Jews to be educated. While they were among the Jews, the children would once in a while renounce polytheism and convert to Judaism.

When the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) entered Medina, the parents of these children became Muslims, yet the children did not give up their new religion Judaism. When it was settled that the Jews should leave Medina as a punishment for the malicious designs and chaos they had instigated, those children also left with their fellow Jews.

Their parents came to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asking him for permission for them to separate their children from the Jews. Such permission was, however, denied to them. They said: "O

Rasula-lah! Allow us to force them to embrace Islam." The Holy Prophet told them: "No. Now that they have chosen to go with the Jews, let them go with them." Another famous verse is:

"And call to the way of your Lord (Rabb) with the judgment and beautiful admonitions, and dispute with them with that which is beautiful..." (16:125)

Invite people to the path of your Rabb with beautiful admonitions and advice. In another verse we are told:

"The truth is from your Rabb, so whoever has the will so he must reject..." (18:29)

So Islam does not say that others must be forced into Islam or a way of life should be imposed upon them. It is interesting to note in the present times that none of the Muslim countries is living by Islam. How can any Muslim, not living by Islam, take it upon himself to impose Islam on non-Muslims? Would he not see himself and his own brethren living outside the bounds of Islam? Islam says that whoever wants to believe will believe, and whoever does not want to, will not. There is also this verse:

"And if your Rabb willed all the earth would have believed, in total, will you then compel them to be believers." (10:99)

Jihad is, thus, not for forcing non-Muslims into believing Islam or to imposing a way of life on non-Muslims. Allah told Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

"O Prophet! it is as if you intend to kill yourself because they have not believed as if you want to destroy yourself. Do not be so full of grief for their sakes. We, with Our Power of Creation and Might, if we wanted to force the people to belief we could easily have done so. If we willed it, we could send down the sky a sign to overshadow their

Jihad is a broader concept and even when it comes to the level of Qital in the cause of Allah, it is not motivated by aggression, by lust for the wealth and riches and other resources. In Islam, fighting based on such motives are types of tyranny and oppression.

neck, for them to be submissive." (26:4)

the earth would become full of corruption." (2:251)

The essence of *Jihad*

One of the main points on which there is a complete agreement amongst researchers is that *Jihad* is a broader concept and even when it comes to the level of *Qital* in the cause of Allah, it is not motivated by aggression, by lust for the wealth and riches and other resources.

In Islam, fighting based on such motives are types of tyranny and oppression. *Jihad* is for the sake of defense, as a resistance against transgression, and can certainly be lawful.

Of course, there is also the third possibility that one fights not for the sake of aggression, nor in defense of oneself or of a human value, but for the expansion of a human value, and this will be discussed later.

Leaving this point aside, however, we see that in the basic definition of *Jihad*, there is no difference of opinion and all the researchers are agreed that *Jihad* and war must be for the sake of defense. The differences of opinion that do exist are minor ones, and concern the question of what it is that has to be defended.

Types of defense are not very much difference from what Daniel Pipes and other anti-*Jihad* propagandists stand for. Accordingly, defense of life, defense of wealth, property and lands, defense of independence, defense of chastity, all these are lawful defenses.³⁰

No one doubts the fact that in these cases, defense is permissible and as we have said, the view that some Christians put forth about religion having to advocate peace and not war, and that war is absolutely bad and peace is absolutely good, has no logical or reasonable basis to support it.

Not only is fighting for the sake of defense not wrong, but it is extremely correct in this case to fight and one of the necessities of human life. This is what is meant in the Holy Qur'an when we are told:

"If God did not prevent mankind some with others,

The sacredness of fighting in defense lies not in defending one's self, but in defending "the right." Defense of the rights of humanity is, thus, holier. For example, freedom is reckoned as one of the sacred values of humanity which is not limited to an individual or a nation.

What does Islam say about infringement of freedom in another corner of the world, which is not ours or the freedom of our country, but freedom in another corner of the world?

In Islam defense is not limited to the actual individual whose freedom is in danger, but it is lawful, even obligatory for other individuals and other nations to rush to the aid of freedom, and fight against the aggressor and repressor of freedom.

After failure of the case against WMD in Iraq, the US pundits, such as Friedman, tried their best to hide the barbarity of their government behind the mask of liberation. Even by that standard, there should be no problem if the holiest form of *Jihad* and the ultimate and holiest form of war is fought in defense of humanity and humanity's rights.

When the Afghans were at war with occupation by the former Soviet Union, the whole world was rushing to support their *Jihad*. The US was the chief contributor to that effort. When Algerians were at war with the French colonialists, a group of Europeans helped them in the war.

No one asks, why fighting in Afghanistan and Algeria was lawful? Is it so that only their rights were transgressed, and that the people who came and provided support from the farthest corners of Europe and America were not "terrorists sympathizers"? Or is it that the *Jihad* of such people was holier than the *Jihad* of the Palestinians, Afghans, and Iraqis today?

It is also important to note that the myth that *Jihad* is not meant for imposing Islam on other. There are some affairs that may be accepted under duress, i.e. accepted under compulsion, whereas some others as per their nature must be freely selected. For example, you can force someone infected with a dangerous disease to take an injection, but if you want to refine people so that they come differentiate between virtues and evils so that they eventually

So Islam does not say that others must be forced into Islam or a way of life should be imposed upon them. It is interesting to note in the present times that none of the Muslim countries is living by Islam. How can any Muslim, not living by Islam, take it upon himself to impose Islam on non-Muslims? Would he not see himself and his own brethren living outside the bounds of Islam?

reject falsehood and embrace the Truth, you cannot do so by the whip.

With a whip, it is possible to prevent someone from corruption and stealing, but it is not effective in making an honest individual. Faith, by its very nature, is not something that can be imposed by force. Faith means belief and inclination — being attracted to and accepting a set of beliefs. Attraction to a belief calls for two conditions:

- a) the scientific aspect of faith that matter must accord with the intellect;
- b) the emotional aspect i.e. the human heart should be attracted to faith. None of these two comes through the use of all available force in the world.

The Qur'an says, religion cannot be imposed because faith has to enter their hearts. That is what a sword cannot do. To the Bedouin Arabs, who had recently accepted Islam without having perceived the nature of its essence and without Islam having influenced their hearts, who were claiming to have "faith," the Qur'an gave this reply:

"The Arabs say 'we have faith,' tell them: 'you do not yet have faith, say 'we have accepted Islam' for faith has not yet entered your hearts.'"
(49:14)

If someone claims that the Qur'an or *Sunnah* incite violence for imposing Islam, it is absolutely ridiculous because the simple logic mentioned above pales by comparison to the wisdom displayed by the Qur'an and the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

By the same token all attempts to eliminate *Jihad* related verses from school curriculum become nonsense, because looking from a negative perspective anything mentioned in Qur'an could be considered far more threatening than the concept of *Jihad* which has been presented to the world in the most convoluted form.

Unlike Islam, freedom can be imposed on a people by force, because transgressors and aggressors can be prevented by force. However a governing mechanism can be established that could

give believers the advantage to live by Islam. For example, if a Riba-free system is imposed, it will benefit everyone regardless if he has a stronger faith or not. If the environment in the society does not promote homosexuality, corruption and immorality, it is going to benefit everyone. It has nothing to do with creating faith in a certain thing within people's heart, which the use of force, of course, cannot do.

Conclusion

As we observed, *Jihad* is a very broad concept the starting point of which is struggle against one's baser-self. The second stage of *Jihad* in the cause of Allah is invitation to the Truth and justice with the objective to fulfill ones responsibility of delivering the message of Allah for the greater benefit of humanity. The last state is Qital in the cause of Allah which has many preconditions and restrictions, some of which have been mentioned above.

Similarly we discussed that *Jihad* is defensive in nature, which does not mean defense in the limited sense of having to defend oneself when one is attacked with weaponry, or his country is invaded and occupied. It means that if one's being, one's material or spiritual values are aggressed or in fact, if something that mankind values and respects and which is necessary for mankind's prosperity and happiness, is aggressed, then Muslims are to defend it.

Furthermore, Islam does not say Muslims must fight to impose Islam, for *Tawheed* is something that cannot be imposed because it is faith. Faith is built on discernment and choice, and discernment is not influenced by force.

The same applies to choice. "*La ikraha fid-din*" — there is no compulsion in *Deen* — means Muslims must not compel anyone for faith is not something that can be forced upon someone. However, it does not imply that Muslims are not to defend the rights of *Tawheed*.

Notes

¹ Daniel Pipes, "What is Jihad," *New York Post*, December 31, 2002

² Al-Qur'an 61:04. Shakir's Qur'an Translation

³ 2: 177 Shakir's Qur'an Translation: "It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is this that one should believe in Allah and the last day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate; and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts— these are they who are true (to themselves) and these are they who guard (against evil)."

⁴ Shakir's Qur'an Translation Al-Qur'an 103:1-3.

⁵ Yusuf Ali's Qur'an Translation Al-Qur'an 64:12.

⁶ Al-Qur'an 49:01: "O Ye who believe! Put not yourselves forward before Allah and His Messenger." Yusuf Ali's Qur'an Translation

⁷ Shakir's Qur'an Translation 2:187

⁸ Al-Qur'an 2:229 Shakir's Qur'an Translation

⁹ Al-Qur'an 61: 02.Shakir's Qur'an Translation

¹⁰ Al-Qur'an 61:03

¹¹ The omission of any of the categories of *Tawheed* or deficiency in the fulfillment of any criteria of *Tawheed* is referred to as 'shirk' and the person is called *Mushrik* (plural is *Mushrikeen*). 'Shirk' literally means sharing or associating partners. In Islamic terms, it means associating partners with Allah and is equivalent to idolatry.

¹² Al-Qur'an 25:43 Shakir's Qur'an'I:K Translation.

¹³ 3: 104, 3: 110, 3: 114 "They who turn (to Allah), who serve (Him), who praise (Him), who fast, who bow down, who prostrate themselves, who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and who keep the limits of Allah; and give good news to the believers." (Al-Qur'an 9:112). "Those who, should We establish them in the land, will keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and enjoin good and forbid evil; and Allah's is the end of affairs." (Al-Qur'an 22:41).

¹⁴ "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity." (Al-Qur'an 3:104).

"Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah. If only the People of the Book had faith, it were best for them: among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors." (Al-Qur'an 3:110).

"Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion; He admonishes you that you may be mindful." (Al-Qur'an 16:90).

"O my son! keep up prayer and enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and bear patiently that which befalls you; surely these acts require courage." (Al-Qur'an 31:17).

"Those who follow the Messenger-Prophet, the Ummi, whom they find written down with them in the Taurat and the Injeel (who) enjoins them good and forbids them evil, and makes lawful to them the good things and makes unlawful to them impure things, and removes from them their burden and the shackles which were upon them; so (as for) those who believe in him and honour him and help him, and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful." (Al-Qur'an 7:157).

"And (as for) the believing men and the believing women, they are guardians of each other; they enjoin good and forbid evil and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, and obey Allah and His Messenger; (as for) these, Allah will show mercy to them; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise." (Al-Qur'an :71).

"Had they gone forth with you, they would not have added to you aught save corruption, and they would certainly have hurried about among you seeking (to sow) dissension among you, and among you there are those who hearken for their sake; and Allah knows the unjust." (Al-Qur'an 9:47).

"They who turn (to Allah), who serve (Him), who praise (Him), who fast, who bow down, who prostrate themselves, who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and who keep the limits of Allah; and give good news to the believers." (Al-Qur'an 9:112).

¹⁵ Al-Qur'an 71:06-09, Yusuf Ali's Qur'an Translation

¹⁶ Al-Qur'an 3:195

¹⁷ Al-Qur'an 22:78. Yusuf Ali's Qur'an Translation

¹⁸ Al-Qur'an 42:15. *"Now then, for that (reason), call (them to the Faith), and stand steadfast as thou art commanded, nor follow thou their vain desires; but say: 'I believe in the Book which Allah has sent down; and I am commanded to judge justly between you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord: for us (is the responsibility for) our deeds, and for you for your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is (our) Final Goal. Yusuf Ali's Qur'an Translation*

¹⁹ Al-Qur'an 61:08. And Allah repeats the same words with slight variation in Chapter Nine, verse 32 - 33 of the Holy Qur'an after the issue of Judo-Christian doubts regarding the Oneness of Allah. Allah repeats His promise again in Sura-An-Noor: *"Allah has promised those among you who believe and do righteous good deeds that He will most certainly make them rulers in the land as He made rulers those before them, and that He will most certainly establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them, and that He will most certainly, after their fear, give them security in exchange; they shall serve Me, not associating aught with Me; and whoever is ungrateful after this, these it is who are the transgressors."* (Qur'an 45:55).

²⁰ Al-Qur'an 09:32.

²¹ *"It is He Who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, that He may make it prevail over all the religions: and enough is Allah for a Witness."* Al-Qur'an 48-28

²² 61: 9. *It is He Who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, that he may proclaim it over all religion, even though the Pagans may detest (it).* 61:10. *O ye who believe! Shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous Penalty?* 61:11. *That ye believe in Allah and His Messenger, and that ye strive (your utmost) in the Cause of Allah, with your property and your persons: That will be best for you, if ye but knew!* (Yusuf Ali's Qur'an Translation)

²³ Al-Qur'an 49:15. Yusuf Ali's Qur'an Translation

²⁴ Tamim Al-Barghouti, *History Repeats Itself,* *The Daily Star*, Beirut, July 23, 2003.

²⁵ Al-Qur'an 22:73-76 Yusuf Ali's Qur'an Translation

²⁶ 22:77-78 Yusuf Ali's Qur'an Translation

²⁷ *"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is this that one should believe in Allah and the last day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate; and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts— these are they who are true (to themselves) and these are they who guard (against evil)." Al-Qur'an 2:177. Shakir's Qur'an Translation*

²⁸ Al-Qur'an 66:6. Shakir's Qur'an Translation

²⁹ *Shakir's Qur'an Translation* (22:38-41)

³⁰ *"Al-maqtulu duna ahlihi wa 'iyalihi shahidun."* Islam tells us that whoever is killed for his property or chastity is a martyr. *"Shahid,"* i.e. martyr, one of the highest stations a Muslim can attain. The statement is a tradition of the Holy Prophet.

