

Ideologies of islam | peace and brotherhood



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Introduction

All religion preaches peace and brotherhood and Islam is no different.

However, how do you justify the killing of thousands of innocents by the Islamic terrorists. Islamic terrorism is the common term for violence,[1] rooted on Islamic fundamentalism, and aimed at defending, or even promoting, Islamic culture, society, and values in opposition to the political, allegedly imperialistic, and cultural influences of non-Muslims, and the Western world in particular.[1]

Today, it is global terrorism has come to fore of the world politics after terror attacks on World Trade Centre on 09 September 2001. While looking at the globosity of the phenomenon of terrorism, it has to be appreciated that before terrorist groups attain their national, regional or global stature the first begin the same at local levels. A consideration of the origins of various terrorist groups would indicate that the growth of the small groups into the national or supra national movements could have been attributed to, if not large measure, to the frustration of the people, with the inability of their governments to provide with the elementary justice, security and welfare. It is difficult to say at which point local terror groups joins hands with the other groups operating in the region to form supra national entities that can operate trans national boundaries. If concrete steps are not taken immediately with due foresight, terror menace can well become the the biggest threat to mankind.[2]

Varieties of Terrorism

Radical conservative religious movements have become linked to terrorism in places as diverse as the Middle East, Ireland, Japan, and the U. S. It is necessary to examine terrorism before further exploring the link between radical religion and the embrace of violence. It is difficult to define terrorism. One person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. There are various types of egregious political violence that are sometimes conflated. Official documents on terrorism rarely define the term or differentiate it from other forms of violent political action, e. g., guerilla movements, ethno-nationalist conflicts or progressive movements that take direct action. Nations often brand opposition/resistance/demonstrations as " terrorist" to demonize and discredit those who might dissent Ahmad (1998) offered a typology of five varieties of terrorism:-

State terrorism.

Religious terrorism.

Criminal terrorism.

Pathological terrorism.

Secular oppositional, or political, terrorism.

There are different motives for these. Some highly visible expressions of terrorism can be thought of as spectacles of violence, media events staged to dramatize an issue by gaining the attention of the world. Terrorism acts as both a symbolic message and supposed means of social change aiming at political transformation. The terrorist act dramatically " advertises" the

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grievance to a larger community that may support their goals. Further, the “pain and suffering” inflicted is believed, at least by the terrorists, to avenge a prior injustice and/or attain the organization’s goal.[3]

Jihad

The word Jihad links its origin to the Arabic word JHD, which means “strive”. Jihad in essence means the measures taken to practice religion even during the times of adversity in the face of oppression and persecution. In Arabic, the terms “Mujahid”/“Mujahideen” and “jihad”, are Islamic-derived terms indicating righteous struggle, and are commonly used to refer to what the Western world calls “Islamic terrorists” and Islamic terrorism. In the non-Muslim world, this usage is often considered to be inaccurate and giving religious glorification to murder, and Islamic terms like “hirabis” and “Muharib” have been promoted as alternatives when referring to terrorists.

“Islamic terrorism” is itself a controversial phrase, although its usage is widespread throughout the English-speaking world. Ordinary Muslims who have nothing to do with terrorism find it reprehensible because it forces upon them a label simply because they, too, are believers of Islam. In fact, the common Muslim believes that you are making him a racial hate target by using the word ‘Islam’ with ‘terrorism.’ Bernard Lewis believes that the phrase “Islamic terrorism” is apt, because although “Islam, as a religion” is not “particularly conducive to terrorism or even tolerant of terrorism”[4]. In his own words:-

” Islam has had an essentially political character ... from its very foundation ... to the present day. An intimate association between religion and politics, between power and cult, marks a principal distinction between Islam and other religions. ... In traditional Islam and therefore also in resurgent fundamentalist Islam, God is the sole source of sovereignty. God is the head of the state. The state is God’s state. The army is God’s army. The treasury is God’s treasury, and the enemy, of course, is God’s enemy.”

This argument is countered by Jamal Nassar and Karim H. Karim, who contend that because there are over a billion adherents of the religion, the phenomenon is more precisely regarded as “ Islamist terrorism” or, because describes political ideologies rooted in interpretations of Islam. In this vein, describing terrorism as “ Islamic” may confirm “ a prejudicial perspective of all things Islamic.[5]

Radicalisation of Islam

As has been noted, modern Islamic political fundamentalism is the product of a desire by some Muslims to return to a pure faith in order to counter and overcome growing pressure from an increasingly westernized world.

Identifying and analyzing these pressure points is essential to understanding the rationale behind the often violent expressions of Islamic political fundamentalism whose ultimate purpose is to bring individual, country and world under the sovereign reign of Allah. As has been noted, Islamic political fundamentalist movements are a twentieth-century development. Not surprisingly, the majority of these movements are of the Sunni variety. Of the 175 Islamic fundamentalist groups (mainly of the political variety) in the Arab world as identified by Dekmejian from 1970-1995, only 32 were Shiite

fundamentalists (with an additional four having both Sunni and Shiite followers). The modern era radical clerics have interpreted the Koran to their advantage and have used it effectively to strengthen the military wing of Islamic fundamentalists and use terrorism as a tool against the non practitioner's of Islam. Some clerics supporting the hard stand against non Islamic societies and nations are reflected in the subsequent paragraphs.

Radical as part of his sermon one Friday in August 2004, the Palestinian Sheikh Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi told his followers,

“ Cutting off heads is part of our religion. Indeed, by God, slaughtering Allah’s enemies is part of our religion. It should be done in accordance with the interest of Islamic nations.”

In another article titled “ The Infidels will be Obliterated”, the cleric Seif al-Din al-Ansari writes

“ Allah made annihilating the infidels one of his steadfast decrees. According to (divine) natural law of alternating fortunes, Allah said (Allah will) obliterate the infidels.... It inevitably follows that this wisdom.... has become the way the life is to be lived.... The (Koran) mentions his decree frequently, to the point that it makes you feel that it is truth of supreme importance.”

In another context, Shiekh Nasser ibn Hameed, an al Qaeda affiliated Saudi cleric, considers the permissibility of using the weapons of mass destruction to bring about the will of Allah. The sheikh concludes that, considering what Americans have done:-

“ If a bomb was dropped on them...that would annihilate 10 million and burn their lands to the same extent that they burned the Muslim lands – this is permissible with no need to mention any other proof. Yet if we want to annihilate a greater number, we need further proof”[6]

Creating an Ideology

A century ago, Islam had the same Koran, the same Prophet Muhammad, the same stories about founding of the faith, and the same religious and the legal traditions. Yet there were no suicides bombers like Salah Ghandour, no incendiary leaders like Hassan Nasrallah, no militant sheikhs like Yousaf al-Qaradawi and no murderous conglomerates like Hamas and al Qaeda. And that there was not should give pause to all those who claim that Islam is, necessarily, a violent and destructive faith. To attribute today's problems to the essence of the religion is to commit a grave error of oversimplification. Islam is a grand tradition that has proven itself capable of sustaining many different cultures, philosophies, approaches to life and political arrangements. Since September 11, and to a lesser extent before, many authors have probed the history of Islam and the Arabs in search of the roots of extremism. One good place to start is the story from the recent past, the story of Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian writer who is described as “ the intellectual hero of every one of the groups that eventually went to Al Qaeda, their Karl Marx... their guide.”[7]

Sayyid Qutb was born in Egypt in 1906. His early education was in the western system of education. After completing his studies, he took up the job of a teacher. He later became a novelist and a functionary in Ministry of Education, Egypt. In late 1940s he did his masters from Colorado. However,

during 1930 to 1950, Qutb lost faith in the secular system and became a radical Islamist. On return from America, Qutb supported the Nasser's secular revolution. Difference arose between Nasser and Qutb and later was imprisoned. It was during this time Qutb wrote some of his best known and influential work – Milestone (a thirty volume commentary on Koran) and In shade of Koran. Qutb was latter executed by Nasser in 1966, giving Islam its earliest and most revered martyr. Qutb was influenced by Mawdudi's writings but constructed a khariji-like revolutionary ideology. He stressed both God's sovereignty and governance (hakimiyya) and the unity of God (tawhid) – with the resulting unity in nature, religion, society, and state – as the foundation of the integrated and comprehensive Islamic system. Qutb transformed the meaning of the Islamic term hijrah (emigration) from a simple description of the Prophet's historic migration from Mecca to Medinah to signifying a definite stage in the development of all true Muslim societies – hijrah is the response of true Muslims to the state of jahiliyya prevalent in their society. They must withdraw from society in order to create a vanguard of committed activists able to take over society when the right time comes.

[8]Some of Qutb's interpretation of Jahiliyyah in his own words are as follows:-

“ Islam cannot accept any mixing with Jahiliyyah, either in its concept or in the modes of living which which are derived from this concept. Either Islam will remain or Jahiliyyah: Islam cannot accept or agree to a situation which is half Islamic and half Jahiliyyah.”

“ The foremost duty of Islam in this world is to depose Jahiliyyah from the leadership of man, and to take the leadership into its own hand and enforce the particular (Islamic) way of life.”

“ Indeed, people are not Muslims, as they proclaim to b, as long as they live the lie of Jahiliyyah.... Today th task f the call is to return these ignorant people of Islam and make them into the Muslim all over again.”

“ A person who feels the need of defence, justification and apology is not capable of presenting Islam to people. Indeed, he is a person who lives the life of Jahiliyyah, hollow and full of contradictions, defects and evils, and intends to provide justification for the Jahiliyyah he is in. These are offender against Islam.”[9]

Qutb’s central mobilizing concept was a reinterpretation of Jahiliyya, and provided an ideology to military faction of Islamic leaders. Most terrorist Islamic groups today, derive their ideology from his writings.

Interpretations of the Qur’an

The role played by the Qur’an, Islam’s sacred text, in opposing or in encouraging attacks on civilians is disputed. Certain scholars such as Zakir Naik have said all Muslims should be terrorists in the context of war and fighting evils of society. When he was asked about the verse.

“ Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies, of Allah and your enemies”. [Qur’an 8: 60]

He replied. “ Every Muslim should be a terrorist. A terrorist is a person who causes terror. The moment a robber sees a policeman he is terrified. A policeman is a terrorist for the robber. A Muslim should be a terrorist for the Robber and all other anti-social elements.” The Princeton University Middle Eastern scholar Bernard Lewis, states that Islamic jurisprudence does not allow terrorism. Professor Lewis notes “ At no time did the (Muslim) jurist approve of terrorism. Nor indeed is there any evidence of the use of terrorism (in Islamic tradition). Muslims are commanded not to kill women, children, or the aged, not to torture or otherwise ill-treat prisoners, to give fair warning of the opening of hostilities, and to honor agreements.”

“ Similarly, the laws of Jihad categorically preclude wanton and indiscriminate slaughter. The warriors in the holy war are urged not to harm non-combatants, women and children, “ unless they attack you first.” A point on which they insist is the need for a clear declaration of war before beginning hostilities, and for proper warning before resuming hostilities after a truce. What the classical jurists of Islam never remotely considered is the kind of unprovoked, unannounced mass slaughter of uninvolved civil populations that we saw in New York two weeks ago. For this there is no precedent and no authority in Islam. Indeed it is difficult to find precedents even in the rich annals of human wickedness.”

In 2007, Osama bin Laden, best known for the September 11 attacks, used quotes from the Qur'an and a militant Taliban cleric's interpretation of those verses to justify his declaration of war on Pervez Musharraf and the Pakistani army, such as:

“ O prophet! Strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be harsh against them. Their abode is hell, and an evil destination it is.” [Qur'an 9: 73]

“ O you who believe! Take not the Jews and Christians for your friends and protectors: they are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily Allah guides not a people unjust.” [Qur'an 5: 51]

“ And fight them until there's no fitnah (polytheism) and religion is wholly for Allah.” [Qur'an 8: 39]

However, the interpretation of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban has been condemned by influential group of Pakistani scholars and religious leaders, who declared that suicide attacks and beheadings as un-Islamic in a unanimous resolution. Marmaduke Pickthall, a Western convert to Islam and an Islamic scholar notes that “ Nowhere does the Qur'an approve a spirit of revenge” and situates verse 2: 194 in the context of a defensive war. Ibn Kathir stated that the Quran clearly commands believers to prefer forgiveness over retaliation wherever possible.

Michael Sells and Jane I. Smith (a Professor of Islamic Studies) write that barring some extremists like Al-Qaeda, most Muslims do not interpret Qura'nic verses as promoting warfare; and that the phenomenon of radical interpretation of scripture by extremist groups is not unique to Islam.”

According to Sells, “ Most Muslims no more expect to apply the verses at issue to their contemporary non-Muslim friends and neighbors than most Christians and Jews consider themselves commanded by God, like the Biblical Joshua, to exterminate the infidels.”[10]

Root Cause of Terrorism

The Worldview of the Fundamentalist. It is obvious to mention that Islamic fundamentalism is caused by the actions of the fundamentalist. What we can ask ourselves is what drives these individuals to advocate fundamentalism? Several scholars have proposed that fundamentalists adopt a literal’ reading of the Quran. Consider the following verses:-

“ And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out. And Al-Fitnah is worst than killing. And fight not with them at Al-Masjid-al-Haram (the sanctuary at Makkah) unless they (first) fight you there. But if they attack you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the unbelievers” (Surah Al-Baqarah).

If one takes a literal reading of the above passage, then it is quite obvious that Muslims should kill non-Muslims where and whenever the former thinks that they are in a position to do so. Take for example Palestinians. Palestinians have been resettled to accommodate for the state of Israel, consequently displacing the former from their own homeland in the process. When seen within the light of the above verses, the perceived injustice suffered by the Palestinians would mean that Palestinians have every right to oppose the Israelis as well as their American benefactors. This is if a literal

reading of the above verses is taken devoid of the context and historical circumstances that gave rise to such verses in the first place.[11]

Islam's Identity Crisis in Confronting Modernity. The historical inevitability and pain of transition to modernization/capitalism has been met with resistance and conservative religious leaders sees such forms as imperialism, colonialism, and the spread of neoliberal ideology. As conservative religious leaders struggled to deal with the advent of modernity, "Islamic modernizers" were more open. Indeed, these Islamic modernizers worked with secular nationalists and were better able to cope with modernity, using European models of socialism and capitalism for nation building and national development (Hossein-Zadeh, 2005). However, when socialism and capitalism failed to deliver for example, instances of poverty were rife; people were alienated from the system they were in; materialism and decadence prevailed in the capitalist system the disappointed masses of the Muslim world turned to the more radical message of Islam as Muslims especially those alienated and disaffected by socialist and capitalists models looked for an Islamic Alternative'. This yearning signalled a desire to return to the state of Islam during its Golden Age'. Conservative religious leaders thereby became the sources of mobilization and self-respect as the disappointed masses sought to return to the Golden Age' (Hossein-Zadeh, 2005).[12]

Socio-Economic-Political Factors. Islam is not a monolithic entity how Muslim states/Muslims relate to the non-Muslim other depends a lot on their socio-economic-political factors. For example, poverty and undemocratic regimes are significant factors that can contribute to Islamic militancy. In Aceh

(Indonesia) and Mindanao (Philippines), marginalized Muslim communities suffer acute deprivation and alienation vis-vis the post-colonial state dominated by the ethnic and religious minority (Rahim, 2003). Additionally, given the lack of democratic mechanisms in these regions, there are no means for legitimate and sufficient political representation thereby making Islamists act subversively. Undemocratic and draconian measures adopted by oppressive regimes to contain the radical Islamists will also exacerbate the threat rather than effectively reducing it. Instances of poverty as well as undemocratic regimes and draconian legislation among many other factors can contribute to the conditions fuelling Islamic Militancy.[13]

American Foreign Policy. American foreign policy is also a significant variable in the surge of Islamic Militancy. Many argue that Islam is a religion of peace Islamic terrorism, however, is a product and response to American foreign policy. This sentiment is reflected upon America's unconditional support for Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the ubiquity of American troops in the Gulf; historical legacy of European colonialism; and terrorist attacks are a cumulative process of humiliating Arabs (for example, displacing Palestinians in their homelands; the Abu Ghraib Prison scandal; torture techniques used by the Bush administration). The rise of non-state actors such as Osama Bin Laden represents the Muslim and Arab world's rage against American hegemony or simply arrogance/hubris (the so called Liberation Theology'). Moreover, the double standards as exercised by the Americans in regards to supporting oppressive regimes so as to secure regional cooperation in the war against terrorism' is seen as having veiled intent - that the war against terrorism' could be a war against Islam'. American, it has been argued,

should look into the causes and conditions that fuel Islamic rage that is, by reflecting upon its own foreign policies rather than blaming the other' for the calamities that had happened thus far.[14]

Drug Trafficking. Drug trade entered the murky scene of terrorism, in a big way, in Afghanistan during the Taliban operations using Afghanistan - Pak axis. Initially, they justified the use of drug business as it was for a sacred cause and even convinced the clergy. However, gradually it became a part and parcel of their activities and drug mafias became big players in the venture and terrorist became synonymous of drug trafficker. Equally, the wide network created by the drug mafia was exploited by the terrorist outfits for their operations. As big money was involved politicians in Afghanistan and Pakistan were easily drawn into vicious circle. Drug trafficking provided the illegitimate money to fuel the Holy War - Jihad across the globe.

Conclusion

Perhaps more important than ideological debates over the nature of Islamic history is the future of reform in Islam. Kepel (2002) suggested that "Islamist terrorism does not, nor can it produce its intended goals and has become consumed with a fantasy of a world-wide triumph of radical Islam." Understanding the reasons for rise in fundamentalism in Islam and factors contributing to global terrorism, it is neigh important to take concrete measures against terrorism, else, we are likely to inherit aworld without peace to the coming generations.

“ Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.”
33. 29. Quran