

Exploring the role of “Jihad” in the Establishment of Universal Peace

• Dr.Habib Elahi Sahibzada

•• Dr. Zahid Shah

Abstract:

Jihad is an umbrella concept of Islam, but unfortunately, nowadays it is misused both as a terminology and practice in a very narrow sense. The concept of jihad is crystal clear in Islam but it has been made dubious by certain schools of thought for achieving their vested interests. Consequently differences of opinions about the definition of jihad emerged not only among the masses but also in the circles of the learned ones, hence, no agreed upon definition emerge. Due to this, questions are raised like whether jihad is synonymous to terrorism? or what is the fundamental role of jihad in establishing universal peace? What is the modus operandi of jihad? But so far, no scholarly effort has been made to hammer this issue out in an unbiased and objective manner. Whatever has been done consist more on either argumentative encounter or defending one’s own ideological stance. For that reason this research article attempts to carry out an objective analysis of the role of jihad in the establishment of universal peace. It is hoped that this attempt of intellectual pursuit will not only be a source of guidance to the common people but will also open new avenues for research scholars in this field.

Key Words: *Islam, ‘Jihad’, Terrorism, Universal Peace..*

Introduction:

The decade 2001 to 2010 was announced as an international decade for a culture of peace and non-violence but the unfortunate incident of 9/11 that took place in the United States of America, and the subsequent devastation of the human family especially in the Muslim world has become a turning point in the history of Human civilization. This event transformed the world in many respects. It was the steering force behind reshaping various international laws, concept of justice, human rights and even changes in geographical frontiers and

• Assistant Professor (Education), Hazara University Mansehra, Pakistan.

•• Interpreter, Provincial Assembly, KP, Pakistan.

even liquidation of national sovereignty; it has also led to the surfacing of new trends, terms and concepts in global politics. Terrorism, no doubt, is one among such concepts. This term has frequently been used and misused to accomplish political objectives rather than an objectively defined and clearly understood concept. More significantly, the term ‘Jihad’ which is a terminology peculiar to Islam has also been muddled with ‘terrorism’ in a way that the common perception, particularly in the non Muslim world, tends to equate *jihad* with terrorism which is a misconception absolutely.

Is it the case that ‘jihad’ is synonymous to terrorism and war-mongering? Is jihad like Holy war? What is peace and what are the points of agreements between Jihad and peace? Is there any difference between the concepts, laws, principles, modus operandi, purposes and results of Jihad and peace? Questions like these have compelled the researchers to ponder over the issue in an objective manner.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Peace is an essential message of Islam, even the very word “Islam” connotes Peace. Similarly one of the attributes of Allah is, *Al-Salamo* which means “Peace” or “God is Peace”. However, as earlier mentioned, there are some serious misconceptions about the use of the word “Jihad” by various individuals, groups and even states for achieving their vested interests. Hence the term has been equated as a second name of war, and antagonistic to peace, but the reality is the other way round.

The problem under investigation is, “Exploring the role of ‘Jihad’ in the establishment of universal Peace”. There is the need of an impartial and intellectually sound and stimulating discussion in this connection as much of the work done, so far, has either been confined to historical contexts or marred by subjectivity and personal opinions which, no doubt, are invalid and unreliable. This paper is an attempt to objectively address such questions and relate misgivings on the basis of independent intellectual inquiry and analysis of the injunctions of The Holy Quran and those of *Sunnah*.

1.2 Objectives of the study:

The main objectives of this paper are as under:

- i. To define and explain the true meaning and concept of Jihad in the light of Quran and *Sunnah*
- ii. To highlight the basic objectives of Jihad
- iii. To show up the basic principles and fundamental conditions of Jihad
- iv. To alleviate misgivings and apprehensions about Jihad
- v. To explore the role of Jihad from a peace perspective

1.3 Significance of the study:

The whole discourse is confined to the relevant as well as significant aspects of the research questions raised in the introduction with reference to the real teachings of Islam for the guidance of humanity in general and for Muslims in particular. The paper is hoped to serve as a significant stimulant for

researchers, scholars, academicians, students, and all others interested in the field.

1.4 Rationale of the study:

One of the serious repercussions that the so called 'war on terror' has brought forth is that public opinion around the world has negatively been influenced. The 'war' is still continued in various parts of the world with no immediate signs of respite. The need for having a conceptual clarity on the concept of Jihad which has been associated with terrorism has gained unprecedented importance, more so because of the danger which is associated with the growing misuse of these two terms. More importantly as there is no vivid, clear cut consensus and globally accepted definition of the term 'terrorism', therefore, every movement or struggle against oppression and injustice for independence or for securing fundamental rights is also considered as terrorism. Another alarming aspect is that, elements involved in pure acts of terror, destruction and savagery take the shelter of Jihad for their heinous crimes against humanity and thereby not only mislead people towards such acts of terrorism under the false guise of Jihad but also seriously damage the real image of Islam and misuse the concept of Jihad.

This study is useful in the sense that it aims at clarifying the myth from reality being associated with the concept of Jihad. It also intends to stimulate further inquest into the subject among scholars for the guidance of humanity for which Islam alone offers a lasting solution. It is the need of the hour to educate and prepare people for shaping a peaceful world. Montessori (1930) so aptly asserts, "Those who want war, prepare young people for war, but those who want peace, have neglected young children and adolescents so that they are unable to organise them for peace". Unless people are prepared and educated about the concept and practice of Jihad, the vested interests will continue to not only damage the real image of Islam—the religion of peace, but also inflict further misery on innocent people, mostly civilians, around the globe.

2. Methodology:

In this research article, Quran and Sunnah are the primary sources of reliance. This is followed by notable commentaries and translations of the Quran and *Ahaadith* (sayings of Prophet Muhammad, May Allah Be Pleased with Him) as well as reputed books on Fundamentals of Quran & Sunnah. Similarly, important literature, regarding Islam has also been utilised. International laws, conventions, agreements, dialogues and sound scholarly opinions have also been considered in exposition of ideas and development of arguments.

3. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

3.1 An overview of literary contributions:

Relatively a few writers, have addressed the topic of Jihad. Besides the original sources like *Ahaadith*, especially the '*Sihah-e-Sitta*', and a few outstanding writers of the early days of Muslim civilization, there are some modern thinkers who have left valuable works on Jihad for the understanding of

the general public. One of the renowned scholars is the late Molvi Chiragh Ali who wrote a book entitled “The critical exposition of the popular Jihad”, (1884) was an effective response to the negative propaganda launched by Orientalist scholars like: Marx Dad, William Muir, Bosworth Smith, Hews, and Samuel Green—to name a few. However, in the process, Jihad has been confined to defensive purposes only and a few Quranic verses regarding Jihad have been presented in a different sense. Maudoodi’s “Al Jihad Fil-Islam” (1927) was another landmark work on Jihad by a person who was destined to be the leading Muslim thinker and reformer of the twentieth century. The book written at the behest of Maulana Muhammad Ali Jaohar and much appreciated by Allama Iqbal, is considered a masterpiece alone of its kind. The time when the former Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan, an Arab scholar and Jihadi leader Abdullah Ezzam wrote “Al Aadaab Wal Ah-Kaam Fil Jihad” (1983) and its focus was the war in Afghanistan. However, the book did briefly highlight the salient features of Jihad. Maulana Khalil Ahmed Haamidi also wrote a book titled, “Jihad-e-Islami”, in which obligation of Jihad and its importance were discussed in an understandable manner for the Muslims. Fazal Muhammad’s book in Urdu “Dawaat-e Jihad, fazaail, masaail, aur waaqi’aat” (1999). This was followed by Hafiz Mubashir Husain Lahori’s “Islam main Tasawwar-e Jihad aur Daur-e Haazir main Amali Jihad” (2003) in Urdu in which the author has discussed the practical forms of Jihad that could be adopted in the modern times. Dr. Farooq’s (2005) work “Jihad, Qitaal aur Aalam-e Islam” came to the fore in which the author has deliberated upon the mandatory conditions of Jihad, including the primary prerogative of the state to wage Jihad, and relations with non Muslims as well as the issues of Kashmir, Palestine and a few others have been brought under discussion. Dr. M.A Salami (2007) wrote “Innocent victims in the global war on terror” that focus on research-oriented debate regarding some affected Muslim institutions and organizations, particularly the NGOs.

This way some very important questions emerged during the ‘war on terror’ and reaction to the same by numerous militant organizations that is yet to be addressed. This research paper is therefore the first, such effort in this direction.

3.2 Jihad- an etymology:

An etymology of the word ‘Jihad’ reveals that it has its origins in the Arabic word, with the root letters ج-ه-د . It is a derivation of the words جَهْدٌ جَهْدٌ which stand for ‘vastness’, ‘might’, ‘struggle’ and ‘optimum effort (Imam Ragheb n.d). Although جَهْدٌ also implies ‘motive’ or ‘intention’ such as used in the verse, جَهْدِىْ مَا نَهْمُوْا قِصْطُوْا بِاللّٰهِ “They swear their strongest oaths by Allah” (Ana’am 6:109). Thus Jihad literally means a man’s optimum effort to acquire something or achieve some objective, (Ibn-e-Manzoor, n.d).

3.3 Islamic concept of Jihad and the prevalent misconceptions

As a result of the on going misconceptions among the public opinion around the world, most of the people think of Jihad as a second name of war. But the fact remains that the Holy Quran has not always used the word Jihad for the

war itself: rather, it has used words like 'Fitna', 'Fasad' فساد and 'Qital' قتال for war. While for an armed conflict for the protection of Islam, Quran has used the term "Qitaal Fi Sabeel-e-Allah" قتال في سبيل الله which means that such a war is not meant for any personal agenda but for the nobler cause of establishing peace for the pleasure of Allah Almighty because Allah Almighty loves Peace. A comparative analysis of the terms Qitaal and Jihad reveals that the word 'Qitaal' has been used 54 times in the Holy Quran, as compared to the word Jihad which has been mentioned in 29 verses, (Baqi. 1982). More importantly this later use of the term stands for a broader sense than mere military action. Furthermore, in common parlance and in Islamic jurisprudence, Jihad has two connotations, one a broader one and the other of limited and specific application. In the former sense, Jihad means every such effort which is carried out for security of Islam. In the latter sense, it means an armed struggle or 'Qitaal' for the same purpose. This means that 'Qitaal' is part of Jihad but neither is every 'Qitaal' Jihad nor is every Jihad necessarily 'Qitaal'. Still another important inference of this peculiarity is that while Jihad is obligatory for all Muslims all the time, thus a general rule for social life. While 'Qitaal' is neither mandatory for all nor for all the time, hence it is for specific circumstances and that too not upon all individuals such as the disabled, the sick, the young and the very aged ones. Last but not the least, the responsibility for Jihad in the latter sense is basic responsibility of the state rather than that of individuals and groups. The Holy Quran uses Jihad in both these meanings separately but by and large in Makki verses Jihad has been used in its wider sense. For instance in Sura Al-Furqan, it says:

فَلَا تُطِيعُوا الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَجٰهِدُوْهُمْ بِهٖ جِهَادًا كَبِيْرًا (Therefore listen not to the Unbelievers, but strive against them with the utmost strenuousness, with the Qur'an (Al Furqan 25:52).)

So goes in 'Sura Ankaboot', the Quran says:

وَالَّذِيْنَ جٰهَدُوْا فَلَنَهْدِيْهُمْ سُبُوْلَنَا وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ (And those who strive in Our (cause); We will certainly guide them to our Paths: For verily Allah is with those who do right, (Al Ankbut 29:69).

However, the word Jihad has been used, more often than not, to mean 'Qitaal' in the Madani Suras. For example in Sura Tauba Allah says, "When a Sura comes down, enjoining them to believe in Allah and to strive and fight along with His Messenger, those with wealth and influence among them ask thee for exemption, and say: "Leave us (behind): we would be with those who sit (at home), (Al Toba 9:86).

[Ibn-e-Taimiya](#) (1981) explains this broader sense of Jihad by saying that Jihad is either carried out through one's heart such as determination for Jihad; or through invitation to Islam and its commandments; or through manifesting the truth from falsehood before those gone astray; or through explaining and clarifying of doubts regarding the right path; or through thinking and planning for acts of benefit for the believers; or else through the act of war itself. Whatever way it may be possible, Jihad is obligatory, ([Ibn-e-Taimiya](#), 1981). Thus far our discourse leads us to the point that in its broader sense Jihad includes self-disciplining as well as performance of the duties and obligations

towards Allah and fellow human beings. In that sense then helping the poor, the needy, disseminating knowledge and spreading education in society, preventing people from wrong-doing and bringing them round to do the right, and striving for the establishment of a just and equitable social order. Jihad is fighting an armed war in the path of Allah. All these actions constitute ‘Jihad Fi Sabil-Allah’.

3.4 Establishing Peace— a prime objective of Jihad:

Society is a dynamic and changing phenomenon; hence human society always remains vulnerable to the emergence and spread of undesirable trends and activities that adversely affect the collective interests of human social life. Islam, being the religion of peace, forbearance, co-existence, prosperity and salvation, in this worldly life as well as in the Hereafter, does not tolerate such things to be disturbed and enjoins positive efforts for ensuring the common good of every living thing, not to speak of Human Beings that have been considered by Islam as the superior creation Islam respects life So, Jihad is waged only when injustice, lawlessness and sedition prevail, and when the use of force becomes indispensable. Sarakhsi (1997) so aptly says, “The purpose of Jihad is to enable Muslims to live in peace and help them achieve betterment in their worldly and religious affairs”, (Al-Sarakhsi,1997).

Another important clarification that needs to be highlighted is that it does not imply that Jihad is waged just for the benefit of the Muslims alone: in fact the fruits of Jihad are guaranteed for humanity in general, without the distinction of cast, creed and even region. As the Quran clarifies:

“Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure”, (Al Hajj 22:40)

This verse of the Holy Quran clearly reveals that had the hand of the unjust and the miscreants not been stopped through Jihad, their criminal actions would not have spared places of worship of any community of believers. Similarly acts of civilian massacre and destruction of property has been strictly prohibited in Islam. It has been maintained that the worst form of sedition is to destroy places of worship. Also, it is proclaimed that one group which indulges in such heinous acts is resisted and stopped by another group from these acts. Allah abhors war, so He puts it down when the transgressors start it. In this connection the Holy Quran in ‘Sura-e-Baqara’ (.....), proclaims:

كُلَّمَا أَوْقَدُوا نَارًا لِلْحَرْبِ أَطْفَأَهَا اللَّهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

“Every time they kindle the fire of war, Allah doth extinguish it; but they (ever) strive to do mischief on earth. And Allah loveth not those who do mischief”, (Al-Maida 5:64)

It is against evils such as terrorism, lawlessness, sedition, hatred, nepotism, injustice, immorality and similar other trends and practices which no society consider useful for the welfare of humankind and therefore Islam enjoins that if peaceful and lenient means such as negotiations, persuasion and counselling fail

to deliver, then force may be resorted to as an ultimate option, (Al-Hajj 22:40). This is noteworthy that Islam abstains her followers from crossing limits or committing excesses, even if it is a situation of war against an enemy.

وقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ “Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors”, (Al-Baqara 2:190).

4. Discussion:

In the light of the above extracts, it is now crystal clear that there is no place in Islam for killing by torture, and imputation or taking up arms against the weak, the aged, the weaker sex, non-combatants who are not associated with the war, diplomatic staff. Nor is there any permission for destroying the places of worship, crops, cattle and other assets meant for the consumption of masses, (Al-Baqara 2:190). The use of chemical and biological weapons, resulting in mass killings and spreading diseases is also contrary to the very spirit of Islam and against the injunctions pertaining to Jihad-Fi Sabil-e-Allah. So it can safely be concluded that weapons of mass destruction, especially in case of civilians, is strictly prohibited in Islam.

5. Conclusion:

In the light of the above discussion it can safely be concluded that Jihad is a peace-promoting concept and practice, rather than anti-peace. The prime purposes of Jihad Fi Sabil-e-Allah contain:

- i. Prevention of terrorism, sedition and lawlessness, (Al-Baqara 2:191, 193, 217; Al-Anfal 8:39, 73).
- ii. Preventing injustice and supporting the wronged, (Al-Nisa 4:75).
- iii. Defence of nation and state against aggression, (Al-Baqara 2:190).
- iv. Disciplining of conspirators and violators of peace treaty, (Al-Tauba 9:12, Al-Anfal 8:55 to 58).
- v. Regaining of territories illegally occupied by enemy, (Al-Baqara 2:191,246).
- vi. Maintaining internal peace and security, (Al-Maida 5:33-34 Al-Tauba 9:23, 47,48-56-57, Al-Ahzab 33:60,61,12,14 Al-Nisah 4:81,91).

The above-mentioned are the situations in which military action becomes necessary, hence Islam allows Jihad of the Qitaal type also, although Jihad in its broader sense is always permitted and enjoined against these and all other major and minor evils.

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