

WAR AGAINST TERRORISM: ISLAMIC VIEW

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ABSTRACT

September 11, 2001, popularly shortened 9-11 was a day to be remembered by the Americans and indeed the entire world. It was a day the worst terrorist act ever was unleashed on the United State of America. Following the suspicion that Al-Qaida network organization was responsible for this act, many people thereby gave it a religious connotation that Islam supports terrorism. It is for this by reason that this paper sheds light on the Islamic viewpoint on terrorism. Thus justice, rule of law and war are discussed as some of the means through which war can be waged against terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

They kindle the fire of war, God do extinguish it, but they (ever) Strive to do mischief on earth and God Love not hose who do mischief

(Quran 5:64).

Today, the notorious but not identical twin evils confronting the international community are terrorism and mercenary. In the word of Jimmy Emperor, (2001:6) both are enemies of the global society with different ‘modi operandi’ the third but now less menacing since after the achievement of independence by most colonies, especially in African countries, is guerrilla warfare.

The most threatening and dreadful of them all is terrorism which is often ideologically motivated to achieve its objectives by means of, or through violence, pathological intimidation, material destruction, acts of murder, Societal disequilibrium, hostage taking and kidnapping. For the terrorist is trained to believe that the ideology he serves should always be determined by the immoral standards instilled in him which he must accept and obey. In the light of the Quran, the act of terrorism is seen as mischief making on earth, which Allah emphatically State that He abhors, besides, no sane person would hide his (or her) indignation to any act of irresponsibility especially when it involves wanton destruction of lives and property.

It is this gruesome and barbaric act that this paper intended to examine from the point of view of the Quran and the Sunnah.

DEFINITION

Longman Dictionary of contemporary English define Terrorism as the use of violence such as bombing, Shooting or Kidnapping to obtain political demands.(Randolph Quirk et al (ed.) 1995: 1490). Oxford Advanced Learners of Current English sees terrorism as the use of violence or threats to generate fear, especially for political purposes. (Hornby, 1995 : 909).

A terrorists therefore is someone who uses violence such as bombing, shooting etc. to obtain political demands.

From the above definition, terrorism depicts mischief, chaos and threat to peace. It should be clearly stated here that Islam stands in condemnation of terrorism because” Islam is both a religion and a complete way of life. Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy and forgiveness. “(Discover Islam Centre, n.d:2)

ROLE OF RELIGION IN HUMAN LIFE

To understand what religion is and what is its role in the life of men, we should first of all know its definition. (Mutahhery, et.al.,1977:11) define religion (din) as:

An all-round movement in the light of faith in Allah and a sense of responsibility for the reformation of thought and belief, for the promotion of high principles of morality, for the establishment of good relations among members of the society and the elimination of every sort of undue discrimination.

In line with the above definition, our need for more religion and religious teachings is absolutely necessary. To be a little elaborate, it may be said that we require religion for the following reasons:

Religion provides a sanction for the principles of morality like Justice, honesty, righteousness, brotherhood, equality, virtuousness, tolerance, sacrifice, help to the needy and other kindred virtues, These are the virtues without which not only our life will lose its order normalcy, but it is very likely to be turned into chaos.

Religion provides power for facing adversities and serves as a bulwark against undesirable reactions of despair and hopelessness. The Holy Qur'an says: "Surely those who are close to Allah, have no fear nor shall they grieve". (Q10:62)

Religion with its firm and Sound teachings can be an effective factor in scientific progress, because its foundation has been laid on the solid bed-rock of freedom of will and on the fact that everybody is accountable for his own deeds. The Quran says: "“Everyone is entangled in the outcome of his deeds”".(Q74:38)

Religion strongly opposes every discrimination based on colour, race or class, because it regards all human beings as God's Creatures and every country as God's country. Accordingly, all enjoy God's love and kindness equally and as such, all are

equal. According to the teachings of Islam no man can be superior to other on the basis of his colour, race, descent, language or class. Islam recognizes only piety and knowledge as the touchstones of superiority. Allah Says:

Mankind, we have created you from a male and a female, and have divided you into nations and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is he who is most pious. (47: 13)

It is clear from the foregoing that religion particularly Islam has a greater role to play in the war against terrorism and through it, peace can be entrenched in the society.

SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

Islam not only stands for oneness of humanity and equality of attaches the greatest importance to the sanctity of human blood. Human life has been made sacred and human blood can't be spilled without just cause. More so, terrorism that leads to murder, assassination, kidnapping and wanton destruction of properties among others are totally detested by Islam.

This is What the Qur an says:

On the account, we decreed for the children of Israel that whosoever killeth a human being-unless it Be for murder or for spreading fasad (mischief, Corruption and prosecution), it shall be as if he had killed all mankind and whosoever saveth the life of one (person) it shall be as if he had saved the life of the entire mankind. Our prophets came unto them of old, with clear proofs (of Allah's sovereignty), but even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land (Q5: 32).

From the above quoted ayat (verse) of the Quran, it is understood that to kill or seek to kill an individual because he represents an ideal is to kill all who uphold the ideal. On the other hand, to save an individual life in the same circumstances is to save

whole community by what could be stronger condemnation of individual assassination and revenge?

For the double crime of treason or terrorism against the state, combined with treason against God, as shown by overt crimes, four alternative punishments are mentioned, anyone of which is to be applied according to circumstances. viz.: execution (cutting off of head), crucifixion, maiming or exile. These were features of the criminal Law then and for centuries after wards, except that tortures such as “hanging, drawing, quartering” in English Law, and piercing by eyes and all such tortures were abolished. In any case sincere repentance before it was too late was recognized as a ground for mercy. (Q5:36).

At another place, while discussing the characteristic of a Muslim, the Quran says: “Those, who invoke not with Allah, any other God for cause, nor slay such life as Allah hath forbidden, except for just cause, nor commit adultery and who so doeth this, shall pay the penalty”. (Q25:68).

In Mukhtarul Aha-hdith - by (As-Sayeed Ahmad Al-Asimiyyi, 1994:24) Hadith 218) the holy prophet (peace be on him) is reported to have said: “of the great sins, the greatest is Shirk, then comes taking of human life, then disobedience of the parents, then telling of lies” (Rawahu Bukhari).

On another occasion the holy prophet (peace be on him) in a tradition narrated by Ibn Mas’ud, said:

The blood of a man who is a Muslim is not lawful (that is, it may not be lawfully shed), save if he belongs to one of three (classes), a married man who is an adulterer, one who owes his soul for another soul (that is, a murderer), one who abandons his religion (thus becoming) one who splits the community. (Abdul, 1974:40)

Just cause' in the sight of Islam is defined clearly in Qur' an 5 :32 and in the hadith of the prophet quoted above. Thus, human life has been sanctified and the spilling of human blood has been made haram (inviolable to a fellow Muslim) save when a person resorts to murder or when his powers are used in creating fitna and disorder in the land. If a person commits these crimes he loses the sanctions and provides a just cause for the taking of his life. These are the major conditions when taking of the human life has been permitted.

Hence, Islam provides justification for waging war against a terrorist, it gives Remission for the killing of a terrorist, if he is found guilty of such act. There is no where in the Quran, where a terrorist is given a cover in the guise of religion. But then, any suspected terrorist should be given a fair trial and his case should be proved beyond reasonable doubt.

In as much as Islam permits the waging of war against terrorism the issue of justice is formally stressed. The events of last year and the unfolding scenarios around the world then revealed the many faces and characterizations of justice. The real question is "what does justice justify?"

JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW

The nature, content and character of our world have undergone a reconfiguration since the fateful September 11, when some lethal terrorists left a horrendous and traumatic scar on humanity's psyche. It was said that over sixty nations lost at least one citizen in the terrorist attack, but America, lost more in demographic and material terms. Presidents Bush, captured the mood of his nation, and by extension, that of a threatened world. He never made any pretense about dispensing justice to those who by the act of September 11 have demonstrated their hatred for America,

her values and institutions. He thereafter vowed to bring the terrorists to justice. What followed was the bombing of Afghanistan by the American forces.

The victims were the people whose lives had no direct influence whether on the jinxed Middle-East question or the shielding of the Al-Qaida cultists. Yet, justice takes its full course and wrath, (observed Ike Ukanna, Nov 13, 2001) at the expense of those who are not able to demand their own pound of justice. To me, I believed “justice” has to do with “right and fairness”, applied to a criminal, it entails arrest, trial and concomitant punishment. The raid on Afghanistan that led to the death of so many people was a typical example of mis-carriage of justice, because Afghanistan was attacked by the United States in the absence of compelling evidence that Afghanistan as distinguished from Al-Qaida, was responsible for the attack against the United States.

On the other hand, in a video taped response to America’s military operation in Afghanistan, bin Laden appealed to the ambivalence of the US in the problems of the Gulf region drawing additional credence from America’s double standards in the Israel- Palestine stand-off. According to (Ike Ukanna, Nov 13, 2001:11) these and more, perhaps, are enough provocations to demand justice of the US by unleashing on them that monumental catastrophe. According to (Khurshid Ahmad, 1960: 41) Islam enjoins its followers to decide the problems which confront them with justice whatever be the consequences. There is no room for jungle justice. In matters of law all are equal and no distinction can be entertained in the administration of justice. Rule of law is supreme and administration of justice is above every thing else. Qur’an 4:58 says: “And when you judge between man and man, judge with justice”. Allah also said in Qur’an 16:90 that: “(He) enjoined justice and kindness, and giving to kinsfolk.”

Moreso, in Qur’an 57 :25 Allah declared:

O ye who believe! Be ye staunch in justice, witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or (your) parents, or (your) kindred whether (the case be of) a rich man a poor man, for Allah is near unto both (than ye are). Follow not the lusts (of your hearts and passions), lest ye swerve and lapse (from truth and justice), and if ye distort Justice) or decline to do justice. Verily God is Acquainted with all that ye do.

The Qu'ran in chapter 5 verse 8 further sue for justice even while dealing with one's foes and enemies, it says:

Oye who believe Be steadfast witness for Allah in equity and let not hatred and enmity of a people seduce you that ye deal not justly. Deal justly, that is nearer to your duty to Allah - Lol Allah is informed of what ye do.

The war against terrorism will be won if the issue of justice is adequately handled using the Islamic approach to justice dispensation. Ike Ukanna (Nov. 14, 2001:1) lend credence to this submission when he observed and Submitted in one of his recent articles titled: "what does justice justify?" that:

The horror in America, the attack in Afghanistan, cultures of violence in the Middle-East and indeed, elsewhere belies mankind's claim to civilization. It appears that the quest for justice has become a euphemism for actions, reactions and retaliations aimed at sustaining man's inhumanity to man. For any individual or group allegedly acting in the interest of the Arab world to think that aggression towards America and her interest will pressure the latter to dramatically change her policies is myopic. Just as for Americans to expect that a few days of diplomatic shuttle will erase decades of deep-rooted, anti-America sentiments, especially, among the Arab world, is the height of naivety. All nations have fallen short of the application of justice.

However, Ike Ukanna (200 1:1) has the following submission from the above observation:

First, we should accept that all human beings without qualification or exception, are born with divine dignity and shared membership of one family of God; we are humans before we are Christians, Muslims, Africans, Americans, Asian and Europeans.

Second and this is important, there is convenient selective interpretation and application of justice around the world. This accounts for the wave of hardship, oppression, violence and terrorism among other act that diminishes our humanity.

USING WAR TO SUPPRESS TERRORISM

Another means through which the act of terrorism could be suppressed is by waging war on the terrorist, but the question is what manner of war? Islam supported using this means, in the Qur'an Allah declared as follows:

Whoever killeth a human being-unless it be for spreading Fitna,(mischief, corruption and persecutions) it shall be as if he had killed the entire mankind (O 5: 32) "And fight them until there is no tumult or oppression and persecution (and there prevails Justice) and religion is for Allah, but if they cease, let there be no hostility except against those who practice oppression" (02: 193)v"Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities and do not transgress the limits prescribed by Allah...

Lo! Allah love not aggressors "(02: 190) "And whoso defendeth himself after he hath suffered wrong, for such, there is no way (of blame) against them. The way (of blame) is only against those who oppress mankind and wrongfully rebel in the earth. For such there is painful doom" (042: 41-42)

These injunctions are very explicit, terrorist is a mischief monger, an oppressor, a rebel, an aggressor, a transgressor, a wrong doer and a persecutor. For that reason they deserve not our pity or mercy and with Allah, a painful doom also awaits them. The only clause here is that in applying war, recourse is again made to our earlier discussion on justice.

In a recent paper on terrorism tagged “on the justification of war as a Response to terrorism” Lutz David. W (2001:1) quoted

Thomas Aquinas who gave the following three conditions that must be met in order for a war to be just:

First, the authority of the sovereign by whose command the war is to be waged. For it is not the business of a private individual to declare war The war must be declared by a legitimate authority responsible for the common good, normally a head of state or head of government, not by a private citizen. This notwithstanding, according to the American constitution only the congress, not the president, has the authority to declare war.

Secondly, a just cause is required, namely that those who are attacked should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault.

Thirdly, it is necessary that the belligerents should have a rightful intention, so that they intend the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil

Apart from these three, he wrote that subsequent scholars in the just war tradition have expanded the number of criteria to seven, they are: just cause, Legitimate Authority, Right Intention, Last Resort, Reasonable Hope of Success, proportionality and Discrimination.

Using these criteria to judge the recent war by the American against the Talibans, Lutz David. W (2001 :2) submits that:the war against terror certainly does not satisfy all those criteria. It clearly does not meet the criterion of last resort. Consequently, it is an unjust war.

The fundamental mistake is attempting to wipe out terrorism without rectifying the Injustice that motivated the terror in the first place.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I wish to submit that the path of religion, through the ideal and principles of Islam as entrenched in the Qur'an and the sunnah of the prophet is the only means through which we can win the war against Terrorism. It is observed that: "the ideologies, laws, systems, ideas and theories created by human beings in the fields of ethics, politics, sociology, economic, psychology and the arts etc- all express their author's ideological, psychological and social inclinations." (AI-Balagh Foundation, 1992:6)

Thus, according to AI-Balagh foundation, (1992:7) some of these ideologies bear the spirit of spite and revenge: while others are characterized by chaos and disorder ----- still others reflect the greedy and selfish nature of their originators. In every aspect they mirror the nature, personality, disposition and psychological state of their authors.

The main difference between Islam and other ideologies is its being the Message of Allah to mankind and a call to reform humanity towards following the Divine path. (AI-Balagh foundation, 1992:7)

Therefore Islam, through its laws and principles, expresses the perfectness of the Great creator, who is the source of good. knowledge, mercy, love and beauty in this

world. His characteristics are made clear by the call of the prophets and messengers in the spirit of goodness, love and peace.

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