

Religious Terrorism and the Misrepresentation of Islam: The Challenge to Global Peace

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Abstract: This article examines suicide bombing as a contemporary manifestation of terrorism and demonstrates that it has no foundation in the normative sources of Islam. While such acts are frequently perpetrated in the name of religion, the Qur'an and Sunnah categorically prohibit the taking of innocent life, self-destruction, and indiscriminate violence. Suicide bombing is thus characterised as Bid'ah-an innovation rooted in ignorance, political manipulation, and theological distortion-rather than as a legitimate expression of jihad or Shahadat. The paper distinguishes between lawful armed resistance directed against clear instruments of oppression and terrorism aimed at civilians, arguing that the latter cannot be sanctified as an act of spirituality or devotion. The discussion situates the misplaced association of Islam with terrorism within a broader historical and political context, highlighting the selective amnesia that overlooks Christian and Jewish histories of violence, including the Crusades and Church-sanctioned campaigns. It contends that external powers have repeatedly instrumentalised militant groups in Muslim lands for geopolitical ends, later disowning them once they outlive their utility. These dynamics have contributed to the portrayal of Muslim societies as "nurseries of terrorism," despite Islam's historical spread through the character and Daw'ah of the Awliya' and Muttaqi Ulama rather than coercion. Returning to Nabawi paradigms of war and peace, the article revisits the conduct of Rasulullah (S), his Ahl al-Bayt (as), and the Ash'ab (ra), particularly the strict rules of engagement safeguarding non-combatants and property. The injunctions of Qur'an on the sanctity of life, restraint, and the moral superiority of forgiveness are presented as an early ethical charter predating modern human-rights instruments. The paper concludes by underscoring the responsibility of the Ulama and the wider Ummah to reclaim Islam's narrative, purge it of fabricated militant theologies, and educate younger generations through rigorous scholarship anchored in Tawhid, Justice, and Rahmah. Only such an internal intellectual and spiritual renewal can effectively counter extremism and restore Islam's image as a religion of peace and 'Adl.

Keywords: Islam, terrorism; suicide bombing; Bid'ah; Qur'an, Sunnah; Nabawi war ethics; non-combatant immunity; political manipulation of militancy; Islamic jurisprudence of war and peace; interfaith polemics; role of Ulama; Tawhid, Adl, Rahmah. Ahl al-Bayt, Rasulullah (S), Awliya, Jihad, Violence, Justice, Guerrilla Warfare, Crusades, Extremism, Daw'ah, Ummah.

The phenomenon of suicide bombing and terrorism in light of Talim of Islam, arguing that such acts have no legitimacy within the Qur'an or Sunnah and are instead products of political manipulation, ignorance, and Bid'ah. The tradition of Islam categorically prohibits the killing of innocents, suicide, and transgression in warfare. By returning to the example of Rasulullah (S), his Ahl al-Bayt (as), and his Ash'ab, a clear distinction emerges between legitimate resistance against oppression and terrorism directed at non-combatants. Historical precedents, such as the Crusades and Church-led violence, reveal that other faiths also bear legacies of terror, making the exclusive branding of Muslims as terrorists unjust and ahistorical. The Qur'an establishes an ethical framework centered on restraint, forgiveness, and the sanctity of life, far ahead of international charters of human rights. Islam historically spread not through violence but through the moral authority of the Awliya and the Daw'ah of Tawhid. The paper also considers the rapid rise of religious militancy in the Arabian region, which has turned it into a battlefield with global repercussions over the past decades. This development has forced scholars to reconsider the notion of the so-called "radical Muslim threat" and its potential expansion. The study examines the historical background that paved the way for the rise of local Jih'ad, the roots and nature of the "mercenary-Mujahid" phenomenon, and the resulting risks for both national and international security.

Suicide bombing has emerged as one of the most disturbing phenomena of the modern world, troubling the conscience of humanity as its primary victims are innocent non-combatants. In confronting terrorism, it is imperative to first understand the enemy, for without comprehending the motivations, ideologies, and distortions behind such acts, any struggle against this horror remains incomplete. Islam, as a complete and immutable religion, has laid down fundamental principles that are not open to alteration under any circumstances. What is carried out in its name, particularly in the case of suicide bombing, finds neither legitimacy nor validation within the Qur'an and Sunnah. Such acts are mere Bid'ah, grounded in ignorance and misrepresentation, when suicide bombers masquerade as Muslims.

If terrorist organizations misuse the name of Islam to advance their brutal agendas, it becomes the moral responsibility of the broader Muslim Ummah to repudiate such claims and to reassert the authentic teachings of the faith. Suicide bombing is not part of the Shari'ah; it is a man-made fabrication that stands outside the bounds of Islam. The Qur'an neither endorses nor advocates it. Yet, paradoxically, Muslims who align with Western paradigms, often in direct contradiction to Islamic teachings, are celebrated as "liberal" and "enlightened" by Christian and Jewish lobbies, even as they abandon the true spirit of Islam. Unless Muslims themselves revive and promote an authentic understanding of Islam among the younger generations, the danger of a violent, fabricated Islam will continue to cause destruction.

No religious group can justifiably sanction acts of violence against innocents. Several militant factions have fashioned themselves as "Hizb Allah" (the Party of Allah), but this self-styling cannot make them the true bearers of that title. A critical distinction must be drawn between legitimate guerrilla resistance, directed against institutional oppression and terrorism, which thrives on sowing horror among non-combatants. Murder cannot be considered an act of

spirituality, and murderers cannot be sanctified as Awliya' or saints. Those who exploit religion for political ambition, greed, or fear are divorced from the essence of Islam.

The Misplaced Association of Islam with Terrorism

It is unjust and academically unsound to define terrorism as a religious act sanctioned by Islam. If Muslims are collectively stigmatized as terrorists due to their political history, then, by the same logic, Jews and Christians bear an even heavier responsibility for the legacy of violence perpetrated in their names. The Crusades, conducted under the banner of the Cross, drenched continents in blood and left behind scars that continue to haunt interfaith relations. The Catholic Church, through its clerics, often played a reprehensible role in fueling terror. To overlook this past while branding Muslims as the "worst lot" is hypocrisy of the highest order. The Taliban and similar groups are not the sole representatives of Islam, nor can the Ummah at large be defined by their actions. Unfortunately, global political narratives have been deliberately constructed to portray Muslim societies as the "nurseries of terrorism." In reality, it is often external powers who fund, manipulate, and weaponize these groups for geopolitical gains, only to later denounce them when they rebel against their patrons. Such "poisonous snakes" rarely remain loyal to their trainers, and history repeatedly demonstrates that they ultimately turn against their sponsors. Islam, in its historical trajectory, has never spread through terrorism. Rather, the spread of Islam across continents was the result of the tireless efforts of the Awliya-the Muttaqi friends of Allah-whose character, sincerity, and spiritual magnetism brought hearts into submission to Allah's Oneness.

Returning to Nabawi Paradigms of War and Peace

To properly address the contemporary problem of terrorism, it is necessary to revisit the example of Rasulullah (S), his Ahl al-Bayt (as), and the Ash'ab (ra). Several urgent questions arise:

How did Rasulullah (S), his Ahl al-Bayt (as), and his companions engage with those outside the fold of Islam?

At what point, and from which sources, was violence illegitimately injected into the discourse of Islam?

Who neglected or transgressed the war laws so meticulously established by Rasulullah (S)?

By examining these issues, Islamic history and sacred texts themselves can testify to the truth, silencing the distorted claims of extremists.

The Qur'an, revealed in the 7th century amidst an Arabian context of vengeance and tribal feuds, laid down principles that transformed violent societies into ethical communities. At a time when there were no international organizations like the United Nations or Amnesty International, it was the Qur'an that became the first charter of justice and restraint.

"Nor take life-which Allah has made sacred except for just cause..." (17:33).

"If anyone slays a person-unless in retribution for murder or for spreading corruption in the land-it is as though he slew all humanity. But if anyone saves a life, it is as though he saved all humanity" (5:32).

"Do not kill yourselves, for indeed Allah is Most Merciful to you" (4:29-30).

Even in legitimate warfare, Rasulullah (S) forbade the killing of women, children, elders, monks, and non-combatants, as well as the destruction of crops, trees, and infrastructure. The Qur'an commands restraint:

"The blame is only upon those who oppress people and transgress unjustly through the land. For such there will be a painful punishment" (42:42).

"Repel evil with that which is better, and behold, the one who was once your enemy may become your intimate friend" (41:34–35).

Thus, Islamic law established a moral order far ahead of its time, where forgiveness, patience, and mercy supersede vengeance.

The Role of Scholars and the Responsibility of the Ummah:

Islam cannot be spread through coercion or violence; the pen of the scholar carries far greater power than the sword of the militant. Those who claim otherwise are not the friends of Islam but its enemies, for they distort its essence with narrow minds and selfish motives. Unfortunately, both external enemies and certain elements of the Muslim clergy contribute to the misrepresentation of Islam. The clergy, by relying on weak narrations and fabricated tales, often fails to communicate the authentic message. Instead, they should ground their Dawah in rigorous study of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Islam is a religion of reality, not mythology. Its essence lies in Tawḥīd, and the true mission of every Nabi was to guide humanity away from the Ibadah of personalities and miracles, toward devotion to the Creator alone. For the sake of this divine mission, the Kalimah, many sacrificed their lives, leaving behind a legacy of truth, justice, and mercy.

Conclusion:

Suicide bombing and terrorism, far from being acts of Islamic devotion, are man-made innovations rooted in ignorance, manipulation, and political opportunism. Islam, through the Qur'an and the example of Rasulullah (S), categorically forbids transgression, oppression, and harm to innocents. To combat extremism, Muslims must reclaim their narrative, promote the authentic teachings of their faith, and expose both internal distortions and external propaganda. Only through honest scholarship, historical consciousness, and the revival of ethics of Qur'an can Islam's image be restored as a religion of peace, Adl, and Rahmah. Suicide bombing and contemporary terrorism cannot be reconciled with the Qur'ani sanctity of life, the Prophetic prohibition of harming non-combatants, or the classical laws of jihad. They are ideological and political constructions, falsely draped in Islamic terminology, and therefore fall outside the pale of Shariah.

The persistent branding of Islam as inherently violent rests on historical distortion and geopolitical interest rather than honest scholarship. Just as the atrocities of Christendom cannot define Christianity, the crimes of fringe militant groups cannot define a global Ummah. What is required is an explicit, sustained repudiation of such violence by Muslim scholars and communities, coupled with a return to Nabawi precedents of justice, mercy, and disciplined restraint in conflict. If the Ummah revives serious engagement with the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah, reforms religious discourse away from weak and fabricated narratives, and re-centers Tawḥīd, Adl and Rahmah as living principles, extremist ideologies will lose both their theological

cover and social appeal. The true defense of Islam, therefore, lies not in militant reaction but in principled scholarship, ethical leadership, and the rediscovery of Islam's original civilisational mission: to guide humanity towards justice, compassion, and the Ibadah of Allah alone.

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