

Suicide Bomber: In the Light of Shariah

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Abstract: *This paper argues that contemporary suicide terrorism in Pakistan is best understood as a man-made, organizational phenomenon that exploits religious language while violating Islam's core legal-ethical constraints. A key enabling ecosystem is the militant socialization that can occur within certain Masjid and Madrasah networks where intolerant preaching, sectarian delegitimization (Takfir), and political grievance are fused into a narrative of "sacred violence." The suicide bomber is presented here as the terminal product of a pipeline: recruitment of vulnerable youth (often from impoverished backgrounds), isolation from corrective social influences, repeated indoctrination, and ritualized preparation-including propaganda recordings designed to eliminate withdrawal and to intimidate the public. The article situates this misuse within Islamic sources and interpretive traditions, emphasizing that the Qur'an prohibits transgression and sanctifies life, permitting lethal force only through justice and within strict rules of engagement. "Jihad" is treated in its broader semantic range-striving and disciplined effort-where armed action is exceptional, defensive, and governed by non-combatant immunity, proportionality, and an obligation to accept genuine peace overtures. The Nabawi Talim distinguishing the "minor" from the "major" Jihad is invoked to underline that moral self-reform and restraint are central, not incidental. Against this doctrinal baseline, suicide attacks are framed as legally impermissible and spiritually incoherent: murder cannot be redescribed as devotion, nor can self-killing be laundered as Shahadat. The paper further challenges popular myths about the origins of suicide violence and cautions against essentializing Islam or Muslims, noting that extremist movements resemble earlier deviationist currents that weaponized religion for power. Finally, the paper proposes policy and societal interventions: structured oversight and accreditation of religious education, periodic psychological screening and safeguarding protocols for those in positions of religious authority, targeted monitoring of incitement, and responsible media practices that deny platforms to hate speech while amplifying credible, learned counter-narratives. Understanding the "enemy" accurately-misinterpretation, manipulation, and organizational design-is presented as a prerequisite to durable counter-terrorism.*

Keywords: *Suicide terrorism; Madaris governance; hate speech; sectarianism; Takfir; Jihad (concept); Islamic law of armed conflict; counter-narratives; media ethics; radicalization pathways; psychological manipulation; Pakistan security.*

Introduction:

Violence committed under the banner of Islam has produced a double injury: the physical devastation of terror and the reputational assault on a faith whose canonical sources neither prescribe persecution nor license the killing of innocents. Yet extremist actors continue to market their crimes as “religious duty,” relying on selective quotation, myth-making, and coercive pedagogy. This paper examines how that distortion is manufactured, why it appeals to certain vulnerable recruits, and how it can be dismantled through doctrinal clarity, institutional reform, and public responsibility. The analysis proceeds on two premises. First, terrorism must be distinguished from legitimate resistance paradigms: guerrilla warfare-however contestable-targets an opposing force, whereas terrorism intentionally unleashes horror on non-combatants. Second, the concept of Jihad has been deliberately narrowed into “holy war,” despite its broader meaning of striving-moral, intellectual, social, and only in rare last-resort circumstances, military. Where armed force is invoked, Islamic norms impose strict limits: protection of non-combatants, proportionality, and a duty to accept peace initiatives. Within this framework, the paper considers the role of certain seminary and mosque environments where intolerant clergy and politicized preaching can normalize sectarian hatred and cultivate a readiness for violence. It then explores the operational “manufacture” of suicide attackers and concludes with remedial proposals spanning regulation, mental-health safeguarding, lawful enforcement against incitement, and ethical media gatekeeping.

It is the intolerant clergy of Madaris who are creating a radical-militant environment, the suicide bombers being the end product. Role of Madaris (seminaries) is very important in this regard. Frequent mental-health checkup of each and every faculty member of Madaris, Masjid-Imam and his immediate staff along with a vigilant eye on the activities of the suspicious clerics cannot be emphasized enough. Moreover, the media can play an important and constructive role if they stop inviting clerics who promote hate speech and sectarian violence. Instead, it should provide a platform to enlightened scholars who have the ability to change the existing narrative. In order to combat terrorism, it is important to first understand the enemy. Meaning that whatever is committed in the name of religion has never been prescribed and nor does it enjoy any legal basis. The Qur'an neither supports persecution nor terrorism. Thus, it becomes a matter of triumphant ignorance when suicide bombers and the like are referred to as Muslims. So, what can the rest of us do when those who wreck terror do so under the false pretext of Islam to promote their self-serving agenda? We can begin by recognizing it as the man-made phenomenon that it really is.

It is important to study Islam from the canon sources. Talim of “Nahj al-Balagha” represents the primary source of interpretation of the Qur'an to counter forces inimical to Islam or the flawed policies practiced by those who may rule over us. And unless those around us, especially the clergy, understand and promote the true spirit of Islam - a violent irregularity claimed by those seeking to present themselves as the most enlightened will do unparalleled damage. It is a bitter irony, therefore, that several religious wings of particular groups, which justify acts of murderous violence against the innocent, continue to be sheltered.

Today, various militant outfits are attacking and fighting our armed forces. They believe themselves to be Allah's representatives on Earth. There is, it must be noted, a great difference between terrorism and guerrilla warfare. The latter resists institutional oppression whereas the former focuses on the unleashing of horror upon non-combatants. Murder can never be confused with an act of spirituality. Those who use religion to justify their acts of greed or their quest for power lie outside the fold of Islam. A Jih'ad is often translated to mean Holy-war, whereas the Arabi word for war is al-Harb. Jih'ad, on the other hand, has several meanings, including struggling or striving. It may refer to internal as well as external endeavours to become a true believer as well as efforts to inform people about the Aqidah of Islam. If "Jih'ad bil-Sayf" (military action) is required to protect Muslims from non-believers - the means to do this can take the form of anything, from legal, diplomatic, economic to the political.

If no peaceful alternative exists, Islam does allow for the use of power, but there are strict rules of engagement to be adhered to. Including refraining from harming innocents such as women, children or physically-challenged people. In addition, any proposals for peace coming from the enemy camp must be accepted. Thus the notion of military operation comprises just one element of Jih'ad's true meaning, and it remains one of the last resort. To highlight this point further, upon returning from a military campaign, Rasulullah (S) instructed his followers thus:

"This day we have returned from the minor Jih'ad to the major Jih'ad."

The Nabavi instruction means returning from armed battle to a peaceful one for self-control and betterment.

Thus, we can say that the ongoing military operation "Bunyan Marsus" waged by the Pakistan Army against well-equipped terrorists was undeniably necessary. All leading Ulama, therefore, issued a fatwa in support of the above. The officers and soldiers comprising our brave forces have sacrificed not only their precious lives but also the familial peace of their loved ones in order to deliver security for the innocent citizens of this country from the bloodthirsty barbarians. The concept of Jih'ad has been hijacked by these militant radical groups who use it to justify the various forms of violence committed by them. In fact, these terrorist groups invoke Jih'ad to fight against innocent people and don't even spare schools and hospitals. According to legitimate scholars, this misuse of Jih'ad contradicts the Talim of Islam. Furthermore, let's be clear about another point: Jih'ad is not a declaration of war against other religions, no matter what militants might try to feed you.

No scholar of Islam possessing a sound mind deems suicide attacks to be legal. It is perhaps unsurprising that an overwhelming majority of suicide bombers come from impoverished backgrounds. This makes them easy prey for those who operate the militant nurseries that are run under the guise of the Madrasah that provides for them. Then begins the process of indoctrinating these young impressionable minds, thereby, reducing them to nothing but a pawn in someone else's game. This includes notions of self-sacrifice as being the ultimate manifestation of glory so divine that at least 70 virgins would be offered in exchange. By the time they reach this point, so de-sensitized have they become that they find nothing unpleasant about slaughtering innocent folk. Indeed, in the run-up to an attack, the handlers isolate the "chosen one" from the outside world. And just as an extra precaution, they often record footage

of the process that transforms him into a suicide bomber, thereby ensuring that there is never any point of return. These videos also serve an additional function: namely, as a propaganda tool to further terrorize the broader population.

It is pertinent to clarify a myth about the origin of these suicide bombers or assassins. It was not the Shi'i Ismaili Nizaris who invented this methodology but the Crusaders who practiced it at large to achieve their "Promised Land". Credit goes to the Missionaries of the Roman Catholic Church who used innocent minds for their political-religious goals in Muslim dominated areas. Outside the traditional army, a single sacrificial-person achieved what a large force couldn't. In fact, the Arabic and Persian word Hashishin's origin was not the medieval Shia Ismaili Nizari Muslims but the Roman Catholic Church. Church champions used drugs and women to seduce important Muslims to achieve their goals. Pope Urban introduced these tactics to control minds and for this, he promised Paradise to the Christians. Ergun Caner criticizes the Pope for promising:

"If you go and kill the infidel (Muslims), you will be forgiven immediately - Paradise,"

He concludes that:

"There is fundamentally, no difference between Jih'adis, in that case, and the Crusades."

Such self-sacrificing zealotry is also found in Indian history. India too had its set of suicide bombers. Way back in the 11th century, a Chera ruler had used suicide bombers called Chavers (a term still in use for suicide bombers in Malayalam) against the Chola ruler. Qualified Nair warriors from four reputed families in Valluvanad fought on behalf of their king against the mighty Samuthiri (Zamorin). Their aim was regaining the full authority for conducting Mamankam, an impressive festival that was held every twelve years and lasted around twenty-eight days on the banks of Bharatapuzha. European travelers, Chinese, and merchants, all of them would be at the Thirunavaya venue when the fight started. Even though the festival was started by Chera rulers, bloodshed began after the Zamorin invasion into Valluvanad and continued until the 18th century.

It is then injustice to label the Shi'i Ismaili Nizaris as the founding fathers of the suicide bombers. What they did, however, was to adopt a strategy for their survival and take it to the next level for their defense. As British author and religious commentator Karen Armstrong briefly puts it:

"Terrorism has nothing to do with Muhammad, any more than the Crusades had anything to do with Jesus. There is nothing in Islam that is more violent than Christianity. All religions have been violent, including Christianity. There was nothing in the Muslim world like anti-Semitism: that is an import of the modern period. The missionaries brought it over, and then came the state of Israel. Judaism has become violent in the modern world, thanks to the nation-state."

Taliban and their like-minded are not the sole representatives of Islam, but the product of the cursed cult of Khawarij, a bunch of rogues who supported militant ideology for achieving their goals, political and religious. Therefore, it is unjust to label the entire Muslim community accordingly. The contemporary Muslim political view and policy of international relations is quite dynamic, in every aspect. It is not peace-loving Muslim countries but foreign masters who

fund these terrorist groups and when such groups ignore their commands and act according to their own will, these fund providers create hue and cry. One must remember that poisonous snakes in the backyard won't always harm the neighbour; those snakes will eventually turn on their owners. It is necessary to examine the issue under the following points:

- i. *How Rasulullah (S) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as) dealt with people of divergent faiths?*
- ii. *When and from which source violence entered into the doctrine of Islam and who ignored war laws set by Rasulullah (S)?*
- iii. *This will allow the texts and history of Islam to speak for them as much as possible. Honest and bright minds will appreciate the need for dialogue. A question must be asked: Why are hate articles and propaganda against Muslims and Islam sponsored by our non-Muslim friends? It is because Muslims are weak, apparently, so forces inimical to Islam can do whatever they wish. It is the Qur'an alone that spread light in darkness and announced the divine instructions regarding forbiddance of terrorism. When Rasulullah (S) taught the Qur'an, (in the 7th century A.D.), there was no United Nations or Amnesty International to keep maintain peace or expose injustice. Inter-tribal violence and vengeance were commonplace. However, the Qur'an repeatedly urges forgiveness and restraint, and warns believers not to "transgress" or become "oppressors". The following Ay'ah may explain the divine policy of Islam in clear terms. Sentence of death is allowed only through the process of Justice, but even then, forgiveness is better. Qur'an says:*

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

Religion cannot be spread through force but righteousness and excellence of truth. Those who wish to command through the sword are not the friends of Islam but its deadly enemies. It is they who widely open the door of criticism against Islam, the validity of which cannot be questioned. It is, however, true that the radical clergy is solely responsible in defaming Islam and its real Talim. The short-sighted preachers of Islam, whose canvas is very narrow, try to spread Islam with the help of mythological tales. They poison innocent minds and boost hatred against their opposite Muslim communities by using the methodology of systematic brainwashing, the advanced product of which is suicide bombers.

Militant mentality cannot be defined as an act supported by Islam even for "Maruf". If Muslims at large are charged due to their political history as barbarians or terrorists, the Jews and Christians are more deserving of this label. How can the modern world ignore the atrocities committed by the Crusaders in the name of religion? The reprehensible role played by the Church clerics cannot be ignored in history. Close scrutiny of the Roman Catholic Church exposes the horrible face of terror. The Christians and Jews both need to improve their image before branding Muslims as the worst lot.

Today, we must recall the words of Salafi scholar Sheikh al-Fawzan:

"Those who claim to be engaging in Jih'ad for the sake of Allah by killing themselves as "committing suicide" are "Mujahideen" for the sake of Shait'an. Those who have fallen into this Fitnah (trial or temptation) have not asked the Ulama, nor have they gained religious Talim from them. Instead, they have isolated themselves from other Muslims and have turned

to people considered as human-tyrants who have brainwashed them, and so they have deviated from the right path which is followed by the majority. They consider other Muslims to be infidels, in what is known as "Takfir". They kill them; blow up buildings and other facilities. They kill the young and old, male and female, and Muslim and non-Muslims due to this deviant belief. These are the consequences for whoever inclines towards evildoers."

Suicide bombing is not an Islamic ordinance but an engineered outcome of ideological manipulation, institutional neglect, and strategic propaganda. Treating perpetrators as representatives of Islam compounds the extremists' objective: to monopolize religious identity while erasing Islam's legal and ethical restraints. A sustainable response therefore requires (i) reaffirming canonical teachings that sanctify life and restrict force; (ii) tightening governance of religious institutions through accreditation, transparent curricula, and accountability for incitement; (iii) safeguarding communities via mental-health screening and protective reporting channels for those in religious authority; (iv) denying media platforms to hate entrepreneurs while elevating competent scholars who can dismantle extremist claims; and (v) pursuing counter-terror operations within the rule of law alongside long-term educational reform. Once the phenomenon is recognized as man-made-rather as divinely mandated-its aura of inevitability collapses, enabling society to replace fear with clarity, prevention, and justice.

By considering suicide bombing as the product of multiple factors we can better understand why it has ended in particular areas in the past and develop strategies that are likely to curtail its use in the future. At the very least, by understanding it as an organizational fact in which the human tendency for self-sacrifice on behalf of others has been reduced from a noble character to a tool, we can strip away the secrecy that still seems to make suicide bombing mysterious and intimidating, and begin undoing the psychological damage of suicide attacks. To control the production of suicide bombers, some suggestions are presented:

Latest devices of Bomb detection should be installed in all important areas.

Every family should supervise their children as lack of attention or neglect causes involvement in destructive activities, the end result of which can sometimes be transformation into bombers.