

Understanding and Responding to Islamic Terrorism

Lesson 6: Islamic Terrorism and “True Islam” (Pt. 1)

Lesson Outline

- Problems with the Phrase “True Islam”
- What Does *Jihad* Actually Mean?
- *Jihad* in the Qur’an
- *Jihad* in the *Ahadith*

Problems with the Phrase

“True Islam”

Many people today, both Muslims and non-Muslims, are quick to say that terrorist groups do not represent “Islam.”

Others will say that these groups have distorted “Islam” and perverted it.

Notice how both claims appeal to a universal expression of “Islam” that is supposedly held by all Muslims.

The reality is that Islam is as diverse as any other religion, with different groups, different doctrinal positions, different religious practices, etc.

Problems with the Phrase

“True Islam”

According to Haykel, the ranks of the Islamic State are deeply infused with religious vigor. Koranic quotations are ubiquitous. “Even the foot soldiers spout this stuff constantly,” Haykel said. “They mug for their cameras and repeat their basic doctrines in formulaic fashion, and they do it *all the time*.” He regards the claim that the Islamic State has distorted the texts of Islam as preposterous, sustainable only through willful ignorance. “People want to absolve Islam,” he said. “It’s this ‘Islam is a religion of peace’ mantra. As if there is such a thing as ‘Islam’! It’s what Muslims do, and how they interpret their texts.” Those texts are shared by all Sunni Muslims, not just the Islamic State. “And these guys have just as much legitimacy as anyone else.

“What ISIS Really Wants” from *The Atlantic*

Problems with the Phrase

“True Islam”

So, answering the question, “Does terrorism reflect true Islam?” is complicated and requires addressing the specific terms.

The better question is, “Is Islamic terrorism consistent with the life of Muhammad?”

- Muhammad is viewed as the model Muslim and perfect follower of Allah
- Modern terrorist groups, and most Muslims in general, appeal to the life of Muhammad as an example of how to live today.

What Does *Jihad* Actually Mean?

In the Original Language

- The Arabic term is a verbal noun that means “striving” or “determined effort”
- Active participle *mujahid* means “someone who strives” or “a participant in *jihad*”

Two Types of Jihad

- “Greater *jihad*” refers to an inward spiritual struggle against the evil in oneself
- “Lesser *jihad*” is an outward struggle against injustice or non-Muslims

What Does *Jihad* Actually Mean?

Jihad and “Holy War”

- Many people interpret *jihad* as “holy war” while others reject the notion that Islam contains any such concept as a “holy” war.
- The term “holy war” is also inflammatory and problematic for discussions between Christians and Muslims because Muslim “holy wars” are equated with the Christians crusades

Jihad in the Qur’an

Surah 2:190—“Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors.

Surah 2:191-193—“And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out. And Al-Fitnah [disbelief] is worse than killing... but if they desist, then lo! Allah is forgiving and merciful. And fight them until there is no more Fitnah [disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah] and worship is for Allah alone. But if they cease, let there be no transgression except against Az-Zalimun (the polytheists, and wrong-doers, etc.)”

Jihad in the Qur'an

Surah 2:216—"Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knoweth, and ye know not."

Surah 4:95—"Not equal are those believers who sit (at home) and receive no hurt, and those who strive and fight in the cause of Allah with their goods and their persons. Allah hath granted a grade higher to those who strive and fight with their goods and persons than to those who sit (at home). Unto all (in Faith) Hath Allah promised good: But those who strive and fight Hath He distinguished above those who sit (at home) by a special reward,-"

Jihad in the Qur'an

Surah 5:33—"The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be imprisoned; this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous chastisement"

Surah 9:29—"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."

Jihad in the Qur'an

Surah 48:29—"Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. And those with him are hard (ruthless) against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves."

Surah 61:4—"Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way"

Surah 66:9—"O Prophet! Strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be stern with them. Hell will be their home, a hapless journey's end."

Jihad in the Ahadith

Bukhari 52:177—Allah's Apostle said, "The Hour will not be established until you fight with the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say, "O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him."

Bukhari 52:256—The Prophet... was asked whether it was permissible to attack the pagan warriors at night with the probability of exposing their women and children to danger. The Prophet replied, "They (i.e. women and children) are from them (i.e. pagans)."

Muslim 1:33—The Messenger of Allah said: I have been commanded to fight against people till they testify that there is no god but Allah, that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.

Jihad in the Ahadith

Bukhari 11:626— [Muhammad said:] "I decided to order a man to lead the prayer and then take a flame to burn all those, who had not left their houses for the prayer, burning them alive inside their homes."

Muslim 20:4645—...He (the Messenger of Allah) did that and said: There is another act which elevates the position of a man in Paradise to a grade one hundred (higher), and the elevation between one grade and the other is equal to the height of the heaven from the earth. He (Abu Sa'id) said: What is that act? He replied: Jihad in the way of Allah! Jihad in the way of Allah!"

Jihad in the Ahadith

Muslim 19:4294—“When the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) appointed anyone as leader of an army or detachment he would especially exhort him... He would say: Fight in the name of Allah and in the way of Allah. Fight against those who disbelieve in Allah. Make a holy war... When you meet your enemies who are polytheists, invite them to three courses of action. If they respond to any one of these, you also accept it and withhold yourself from doing them any harm. Invite them to (accept) Islam; if they respond to you, accept it from them and desist from fighting against them... If they refuse to accept Islam, demand from them the Jizya. If they agree to pay, accept it from them and hold off your hands. If they refuse to pay the tax, seek Allah's help and fight them.

Jihad in the Ahadith

Tabari 9:69—"Killing Unbelievers is a small matter to us." The words of Muhammad, prophet of Islam.

Tabari 17:187—By God, our religion (din) from which we have departed is better and more correct than that which these people follow. Their religion does not stop them from shedding blood, terrifying the roads, and seizing properties.¹ And they returned to their former religion." The words of a group of Christians who had converted to Islam, but realized their error after being shocked by the violence and looting committed in the name of Allah. The price of their decision to return to a religion of peace was that the men were beheaded and the woman and children enslaved by the caliph Ali.

Conclusion

Records of violence and exhortations to violence are found throughout the Qur'an and hadith

While many Muslims are quick to point out that the "greater" jihad is spiritual, it appears that Muhammad's main emphasis was on the "lesser" jihad, which was armed assault on non-Muslims.

Questions and Comments