Terrorism and Jihad, An Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

Man has always wanted peace: war has never been his aim. Yet wars have always been an undeniable fact of life. Human desire for peace, at times wars do become indispensable. However, ideas differ as to when wars could be justified and when they are just a matter of sheer aggression. In tune with its claim to universality, both in terms of time and space, Islam has propounded its own everlasting concept of war, based on Divine wisdom and consideration of human welfare. Unfortunately, however, over a period of time, Islam's position on war has been hidden in confusion and misinterpretations. To make matters worse, more often than not, Jihad has come to be equated with terrorism something which runs counter to the spirit and substance of Islam. This has more to do with the actions of a few misguided elements. Nevertheless, an overwhelming majority of Muslims, not only the educated but also the common believers, are against engaging war beyond the limitations prescribed in Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH). Although a lot has been written on Jihadand terrorism. Much of the data on Jihad is limited of one kind or another. So, this article is an attempt of a comparative analysis between Jihad and terrorism. Since, 9/11 modern world said that "Every Muslim is not a Terrorist, But Every Terrorist is a Muslim".

Keywords: Jihad, Terrorism, Islam, Jihad-Fi Sabil-e-Allah, Qitaal

Introduction

"Terrorism today is a worldwide phenomenon. 9/11 is the incident when America hit by a sudden attack the results of whichexceededaffectees of more Americans in a day at any time after Civil War. Nineteen men from different countries hijacked four airplanes, and during this hijackings, building of Trade Center was ruinedand Pentagon wasalso badly damaged and more than 3000 people were dead.

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This was second attack on same building (first in February 1993)and proved that there is no space left safe from terrorism. This shows that terrorists can attack anywhere with ease on a large scale.

The incident of 9/11 has proved a momentous event indeed: it has changed the world in many ways. Not only has it led to reshaping of various international laws, concept of justice, human rights and even changes in geographical frontiers, it has also led to the emergence of new trends, terms and concepts in international politics. Outstanding among such concepts is that of terrorism. Rather than being an objectively defined and clearly understood concept, this term has often been used, and misused, to serve political objectives. More importantly, the term 'Jihad' 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.

What 'jihad'is? Is it sameas terrorism? Or is it a holy war? How we can define terrorism and is there any difference between terrorismandjihad? These and many other questions, indeed, have to be answered and especially increase of violence and terrorism. As a matter of fact, hardly someone who has inclusive answer to questionslikethese. So, for this there is a dire need for an unbiased and rational discussion. As Muslims it is our prime duty to explain true essence of Jihad, its basic aims and objectives as described in the teachings of Islam to have a clear picture of differences between terrorism and Jihad (that is fundamental according to the teachings of Islam.

People with different mental levels are present in every society. Literate people or intelligentsia plays pivotal role in any society, thatcontrols the masses. They are duty bound to spread true essence of the teachings of Islam. In the Quran comprehensive guidance for the propagation of Islam has been revealed. Allah says:

<div dir="rtl">

بِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَ جَادِلْهُم بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ أَهُوْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ وَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ۞

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(O Prophet Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way. Lo! thy Lord is best aware of him who strayeth from His way, and He is Best Aware of those who go aright[i]).(An-Nahl: 125)

Jihad

'Jihad' is basically an Arabic word derived from the root j.h.d. which mean 'strive' 'struggle' and 'expand effort[ii] although it also implies 'motive' or 'intention' such as used in the verse,

وَأَقْسَمُواْ بِاللهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ لَّيُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا الآيَاتُ عِندَ اللهِ وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ أَنَّهَا إِذَا جَاءتْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝

(And they swear a solemn oath by Allah that if there come unto them a portent they will believe therein. Say: Portents are with Allah and (so is) that which telleth you that if such came unto them they would not believe)"[iii](Anam,6:109).So, literally 'Jihad' and 'Juhad' mean man's utmost effort to attain something or acquire objective (striving hard for durable peace).

Qitaal

Most of the people take Jihad only in the meaning of war. But as matter of fact war itself, the Holy Quran has not always used the word Jihad: instead, it has used words like 'Fitna', 'Fasad' and 'Qitaal' or war as such, while for an armed struggle for the cause of Islam, Quran has used the term "Qitaal Fi Sabeel-e-Allah" which means that such a war is not for any personal agenda but for the nobler cause for the pleasure of Almighty Allah.

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لاَ تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنِ انتَهَوْاْ فَإِنَّ اللهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ۝

(And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is all for Allah. But if they cease, then lo! Allah is Seer of what they do) (Al-Anfal, 8:39)[iv].

The word 'Qitaal' has been used 54 times in the Holy Quran while the Jihad and its related matters have been mentioned in 29 verses, each time in a broader sense than only war like action.

Jihad and Qitaal

Similarly, in common phrase of Islamic teachings, Jihad has two impressions, one a broader one (every effort that is undertaken for the supremacy of Islam) and

the other of narrowone (an armed struggle or 'Qitaal' or the same purpose). Which means 'Qitaal' is one form of Jihad but every 'Qitaal' is not Jihad and visa verse.

Another misunderstandingof "Jihad" has been formulatedin context with its position in Islam which is declaration it as "Farz-e-Kifayah" rather as "Farz-e-Ayn". In fact Qital is "Farz-e-Kifayah" when anIslamic state declare war and inspires all Muslims, then it becomes Farz-e-Ayn. That was happened once in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and that was during the battle of Tabuk. In normal conditions, Qital is not compulsive (Farz-e-Ayn).

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, like

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللهَّ ۛ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿۞﴾

(As for those who strive in Us, We surely guide them to Our paths, and lo! Allah is with the good)[v](Al Anqoot 29/69). However, the word Jihad has been used, more often than not, to mean 'Qitaal' in the MadaniSuras, like,

وَإِذَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌجَاهَدُواوَاَّمْنُوابِاللهَِّوَرَسُولِهِ اسْتَأْذَنَكَ أُوْلُواْ الطَّوْلِ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالُواْ ذَرْنَا نَكُن مَّعَ الْقَاعِدِينَ ﴿۞﴾

(And when a surah is revealed (which saith) : Believe in Allah and strive along with His messenger, the men of wealth among them still ask leave of thee and say : Suffer us to be with those who sit (at home))[vi] (Al Toba 9/86).

Terrorism

Word "*DahshatGardi*" is combination of Urdu and Persian words meaning to spread panic and harassment. The corresponding word in English for '*dahshat*' is 'terror' while the word for '*dahshatgardi*' is 'terrorism'.

The Oxford dictionary defines terrorism thus:

"The use of violence for political aims or to force a government to act especially because of the fear it causes among the people; appalling acts of terrorism[vii]."

According to Chambers dictionary:

"The systematic and organized use of violence and intimidation to force a government or community, etc to act in a certain way or accept certain demands[viii]".

In almost every language there is some word for 'terror' and 'fear'. There are also related laws, defining acts of terror and prescribing punishment for the perpetrators. Despite all this, the way the term terrorism is being used around the world these days, there is neither any agreed definition of terrorism nor the definite contours of terrorism clarified.

Similarly according to World Book Encyclopedia terrorism is the use or threat of violence to create fear and alarm. Terrorists murder and kidnap people, seal off banks, hijack planes, set fires and commit other serious crimes but the terrorists differ from those of ordinary criminals. Most criminals want money or some other form of personal gain. But the terrorist commits crimes to support political causes.

Before independence, freedom fighters of India were labeled as terrorists by the British government while the same individuals have been lauded by local residents for the same activities and hailed as 'patriots'.

Although there is no consensus, internationally defining terrorism, there are some forms of attack which have been classified as terrorism. They help in understanding what action does and what does not constitute terrorism.

These are: attacking civilian population and civil infrastructure; hijacking aero planes of civil aviation; kidnapping civilians or combatants; attacks on combatants in civil get up; use of poisonous gases and chemical weapons against combatants.

To sum up the discussion so far it can be safely said that terrorism is persuasive use of force for achieving political objectives through spreading of fear and insecurity among common citizens as well as combatants by targeting people and public or private installations, buildings and infrastructure and even committing indiscriminate killings, kidnapping and tortures, physical and mental, in the process.

Disparity among Jihad and Terrorism

As said earlier on, Jihad and terrorism are two different concepts. Jihad is basically meant for the eradication of harmful trends and developing society, while terrorism directs to destruction of the people and society. Terrorism involves committing crimes against humanity with physical and mental torture of army personals as well as civilians, destruction of public and private property and infrastructure to inject fear and harassment among the masses, while Jihad is against these things. In other words Jihad is obligatory against such actions. Unlike terrorism, Jihad is never doneto fulfill any human desires or worldly objectives: it aims only at the establishment of an Islamic order according to Allah's commandment. Nothing can fill the gap between two, no matter how one try to portray actions of individuals and groups into Jihad as it is highly unjust and misleading to equate the wrong actions of a few with the noble concept of Jihad.

MaulanaMaudoodi has clarified the true essence of jihad in *Al Jihad Fil Islam*. According to him, leaving aside all established terms of the time, phrase 'Jihad Fi Sabil-e-Allah' which testifies truthfully to its name and completely separates it from concepts of savage wars. Instead, a Mujahid's objective remains the removal of the cause of evil. As the word 'effort' do not convey full meaning, as effort can be both for the good and for the bad objectives, therefore the term stands Jihad 'FiSabil-e-Allah', that is, to exclude elements of revenge, ambition for territorial expansion, fulfillment of personal desires, attainment of wealth and property, winning fame and popularity or gaining political supremacy. So, Jihad Fi Sabi-e-Allah therefore means "To optimum effortfor Allah i.e. doing utmost for the pleasure of Allah one is capable of,and doing all efforts for establishing paramountcyof Allah i.e. Islam."[ix]

Sanctity of Human Life:

Islam forbids war and killing of any single or on a mass level, Islam has prohibits unlawful killing of even a human being and has been equalized with the killing of entire human race "

مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَٰلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَن قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُم بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ ۞

(For that cause We decreed for the Children of Israel that whosoever killeth a human being for other than man slaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if be had killed all mankind, and whoso saveth the life of one, it shall be as if he had: saved the life of all mankind. Our messengers came unto them of old with clear proofs (of Allah's sovereignty), but afterwards lo! many of them became prodigals in the earth[x] (Al-Maidah, 5:32).

The Prophet of peace and mercy, Muhammad (May Allah be Pleased with Him) is reported to have said:

"O people! do not aspire for a war with the enemy and pray to Allah for peace and security in the world. If perforce you have to fight the enemy, then adopt patience and perseverance and then remember that Paradise is under the shadow of the sword".

Objectives of Jihad

Humans remain insecure against the growth and spread of undesirable trends which are harmful for the collective good of human life. Islam is a religion of peace and prosperity, does not want such things to happen and orders positive efforts for the common good of all. For example, when unfairness, inequality and lawlessness prevails the use of force becomes indispensable, Jihad is waged. However, it does not main that Jihad is only for the benefit of the Muslims alone, in fact Jihad is for humanity at large, irrespective of any religion. As the Quran clarifies:

فَهَزَمُوهُم بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُودُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لَّفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَـٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ۞

"So they routed them by Allah's leave and David slew Goliath; and Allah gave him the kingdom and wisdom, and taught him of that which He willeth. And if Allah had not repelled some men by others the earth would have been corrupted. But Allah is a Lord of Kindness to (His) creatures". (Al-Baqara, 2: 251)[xi]

Islam is against evils like, injustice, immorality,lawlessness, hatred, terrorism, nepotism and similar trends which no society consider useful for their people and therefore It says in peaceful and polite means like persuasion and counseling fail to deliver, then force may be used to an option.

رِجُوا مِن دِيَارِهِمْ أَخْغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلاَّ أَن يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللهُ وَلَوْلاَ دَفْعُ اللهِ النَّاسَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لَّهُدِّمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُكَفِيهَا وَلَيَنصُرَنَّ اللهُ مَن يَنصُرُهُ إِنَّ اللهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ۝

"Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said: Our Lord is Allah. For had it not been for Allah's repelling some men by means of others, cloisters and churches and oratories and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft mentioned, would assuredly have been pulled down. Verily Allah helpeth one who helpeth Him. Lo! Allah is Strong, Almighty". (Al-Hajj, 22:40)[xii]

Simultaneously Islam also forbids its followers from crossing limits or committing excesses, even if it is a situation of war with an enemy.

لُواْ فِي سَبِيلِواَلِهَاتِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلاَ تَعْتَدُواْ إِنَّ اللهَ لاَ يُحِبِّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ۝

"Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not, aggressors". (Al-Baqara, 2:190)[xiii]

From above it is quite clear that in Islam, there is no justification for killing by anguish against the weak, aged, weaker sex, non combatantsand people who are not associated with the war, neither any room for bombing at the places of worship or other assets meant for the welfare of public. Chemical or biological weapons for kill or diseases, or weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are also in contrastwith the Holy teachings of Islam.

Whereas, the objectives of Jihad Fi Sabil-e-Allah are prevention of lawlessness, injustice terrorism, agitation, aggression and things like these. While situations, in which military action becomes necessary, hence Islam allows Jihad of the Qitaal type. Which is the narrow sense, while in its broader sense is always permitted and against all major and minor evils.

Aims and objectives of Terrorism

Aims and objectives of terrorism are influence, military supremacy or political sovereignty, worldly achievement and other material benefits which may take the shape of territorial expansion, economic benefits, reducing power of certaingroup or people or to serve as agents and proxies of the superpowers. If some misguided individuals/group misuses the concept of Jihad as a way for attaining personal or extremist agenda, it is the duty of every individual to clear this confusion or mingling of Jihad with terrorism. Regardless to the objectives, if actions are in contrast to the teachings of Islam and Jihad-e-Fi Sabil Allah, such will be the acts of terrorism.

- Base of the two phenomenon, if we take Jihad first, its main aim is elimination of social evils but in case of terrorism it supports evils and acts related to evil. Jihad is virtue and praiseworthy concept, terrorism is harmful for ugly.
- Secondly, in Jihad there is absence of personal aims and objectives, but supremacy of Will of Allah which is a noble cause while in terrorism all worldly aims and objects remains focus of attention.
- Thirdly, in terrorism, there is no limit, no restriction, no discrimination between innocent and not, it is blunt application of coerce tactics, that include, use of arms, torturous measures against innocent. While in Jihad, these are neither allowed in theory nor in practice. Jihad (Qitaal) is allowed only as a last resort in situations,as modern world would also allow such an option.

Conduct of Jihad and Terrorism

As Islam permits Jihad (Qitaal) as a last resort as an option, this is all, Islam has imposed certain restrictions of fighting, which are absent in the modern era like ours, like the concept of total war (like, killing non combatants; killing combatants after ceasefire; burning enemies; killing by torture; loot and plunder; destruction and spreading agitation, killing envoys; taking personal revenge; declaring through deception). So far so, Islam has designed principles for the conduction of militarily fighting in the Name of Allah. It is also evident that all the modern laws and conventions are far away as we compare them with the teachings of Islam, which Islam gave to the humanity for more than fourteen hundred years ago.

- Main obligation required for Jihad is that it is mandatory compliance of Islamic state, in other words jihad is discretionary power of state and believers are required to act in accordance with unity and discipline. If it is left on certain individuals or group, then the result will be in chaos and anarchy which is not desired by Islam in any situation. Main rule in Jihad is obedience of the Muslim ruler otherwise no war will remain Jihad Fi Sabil-e-Allah but terrorism.

- Islam gives guidelines for the war theatre and postwar situation. Some of these guidelines are: restrain from mass killing, rioting, desecrate dead bodies, respect and honour of women, no destruction of worship places.

- From these facts it is clear, Jihad, being for nobler cause, that aims improvement and betterment of society, while, for the terrorist, the golden principle is, "everything is fair in love and war", and this mindset does not believe in any respect for higher human values.

- There is no doubt that terrorism is heinous crime against humanity without any justification no matter who involve in it. For the terrorist "the end justifies by the means" but for the Mujahid, both the end and the means have to be justified and lawful according to Islam.

- Jihad, unlike terrorism, is not blindor violent for using force against humans, rather it is disciplined use of force on aims and once such aims are achieved in accordance with the norms of war, there is no a further revengeful act, against combatants, their relatives, what to talk of common citizens.

End Results of Jihad and Terrorism

As a result of Jihad, eliminates injustice, oppression, fear and harassment, savagery and lawlessness and terrorism and the wronged gets relief. Although some blood is shed in the battlefield but this blood is for supremacy of justice, equity and peace in society. That is why the blood of the martyr is so sacred that on its first drop falling on the battlefield, Allah forgives all the sins of the martyr. Those who die in this cause are not deemed dead but alive before Allah Almighty with special blessings.

وَ لاَ تَقُولُواْ لِمَن يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ أَمْوَ اتٌ بَلْ أَحْيَاء وَ لَكِن لاَّ تَشْعُرُونَ ۝

(And call not those who are slain in the way of Allah "dead." Nay, they are living, only ye perceive not)[xiv] (Al Baqara 2/154)

Terrorism, on the other hand is sheer destruction, disorder, fear, chaos and insecurity. Populace is wiped out, properties are destroyed even flora and fauna bear the brunt at times. Business and social activities are affected. In short life becomes standstill and the world as a hell. Terrorists are, like cancer affected part of body, as soon as it is operated out it will be better for the rest of body. Jihad is a means of eliminating those diseased organs of human body in the interest of mankind.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُواْ وَجَاهَدُواْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ أُوْلَئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللّهِ وَاللّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ۝

(Lo! those who believe, and those who emigrate (to escape the persecution) and strive in the way of Allah, these have hope of Allah's mercy. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful)[xv](Al Baqara 2/218).

Conclusion

Wars and efforts to avoid wars started with the start of human race. However, most wars are for fulfillment of some common objectiverather than for any inspiring ideal such as in the teachings of Islam. Ordinary wars are fought under wide range of aims such as establishing rule over another, acquisition of lands, selfprojection and revenge etc. These wars do not fought under international laws and norms of warfare.

However, wars in Jihad Fi Sabil-e-Allah, fought not under these or any personal desire but for the divine mission of just, equitable and peaceful social order for the mankind with certain guidelines under which wars are to be fought, things that put forward by Islam hundreds of years ago when there was any civilized rule of war present. International conventions related to wars and prisoners still fall far short of the ideals which Islam had introduced.

In short Jihad has nothing to do with terrorism and the two are opposite in nature both in theory and action. Terrorism is evil while Jihad is blessing; terrorism is human suffering and destruction whereas Jihad is ahealing effect against all sufferings and destruction. Terrorism has no civilized norms with nolimits, Jihad is a measured and calculated. Terrorism endangers fabric of society and wipes out noble human values while Jihad aims at restoring justice, equality, rule of law, respect for human beings, peace and tranquility.

End Notes

[i] An-Nahl: 125

[ii] Ragheb Imam, Mafrodat-Al Quran, Translated by Muhammad AbduhuFerozPoori, Ahl-e-Hadees Academy, Lahore, Words Jahd, p-189

[iii] Anam 6:109

[iv] Al-Anfal, 8:39

[v] Al Anqoot 29/69

[vi] Al Toba 9/86

[vii] Oxford Dictionary, Word: Terrorism

[viii] Chambers Dictionary, word: Terrorism.

[ix] AbulA'laMaududi,The Meaning of The Quran.Vol-3,Page-40

[x] Al-Maidah, 5:32

[xi] Al Baqara 2/251

[xii] Al-Hajj, 22:40.

[xiii] Al Baqara 2/190

[xiv] Al Baqara 2/154.

[xv] Al Baqara 2/218