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Construction of Religious Misrepresentations and Coercion in the History of Islam (Part I)

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Abstract:

This paper continues the previous chapters in which we discussed the fundamentals of Islam in light of the Quran and Hadith. Henceforth, we will try to trace the construction of a coercive ideology introduced in the twentieth century, entitled Islamic fundamentalism, that played a recurring role in the defamation of Islam as a religion of terrorism. The chapter is based upon the findings of research done through fieldwork in Iraq, Iran and Pakistan with the intention of exposing the misrepresentations which support the mainstreaming of coercion, extremism and terrorism by radical Islamists. To highlight the concept, five main aspects are selected which include: Jihad, Coercion, Human Reasoning, Blasphemy and Humanity. Humanity is the foundation of Islam. Coercion is strictly forbidden in Islam. Both the Holy Quran and Hadith require humans to seek righteous knowledge and understanding in all matters of life while blasphemers and wrongdoers had been forgiven or foregone by Prophet (SAWA), leaving the matter for the Day of Judgment. Similarly, the genuine concept of Jihad, its varieties, the circumstances for its practice in the light of Quran and hadith is in contradiction with the current Jihad narrative that is spreading terrorism instead of the true message of Islam, which is peace. In spite of this clear Islamic message of peace for humanity, the current fundamentalism with its extremist ideology is intolerant, even violent. So the role of religious misrepresentations, how they are constructed and for what purpose will be discussed.

Introduction:

“Half of the weight of the spread of disbelief in the world is carried by religious people who made God detestable to His creation through their terrible conduct and terrible speech,”¹ so says Shaykh Muhammed Al-Ghazali, quoted by Mudasir Maqsood in his article ‘Gender Equality and Social Engineering’. One must verify whether religions really preach violence and coercion or whether they are being misrepresented by the representatives, the fundamentalists, the scholars, the interpreters, the translators, the evaluators, the reviewers or the commentators. The basic teachings of the religion Islam are taken into consideration and

¹ Maqsood, Mudasir (10 June 2018), Gender equality and social engineering, Publishers [Rising Kashmir](#)

we have examined some of the fundamentals of Islam in the previous chapter. Now, we will further look into them in comparison with the social, political, and cultural influences that build hurdles for the acquisition of the genuine teachings, preachings and practices which were introduced originally. For the current wave of extremism, whether through radicalisation or through radicalisation, is connected directly with Islam. On one side, there is radicalisation that is leading to militant terrorism in the name of Jihad, and on the other side there is radicalisation in the form of Islamophobia and hatred toward the believers of Islam as well as toward any kind of Islamic display or practice.

To trace out the roots of coercive fundamentalism in Islam, field work was conducted in Iraq, Iran and Pakistan (2017), in the form of interviews from the religious scholars and surveys from common people. The core idea of the field work was to have a comparative analysis of the perceptions of the teachings of Islam through Quran and hadith, and the perceptions of widespread extremist Islamic fundamentalism, hereafter called Islamism. Five often misrepresented, misinterpreted concepts, including Jihad, Blasphemy, Peace and Coercion, Humanity and Islam, and Human Reasoning were picked up to form a questionnaire for surveys and interviews. However, during interviews, some other misrepresentations also came under discussion, emerging as follow ups to the answers, for example covering the status of women in Islam, education for women, patriarchy, haqooq Allah (God's Rights) and haqooq ul ibad (Human Rights), hypocrisy of power politics and its distortions, terrorism and terrorists, and of course Islamist fundamentalism. Results were mostly according to expectations, along with some interesting yet shocking exceptions. One should never underestimate exceptions. Exceptions, in fact, play a recurring role in forgery and fabrications required to strengthen ambiguities for misrepresentations. Before sharing the results of the collected data, we need to locate the traces of coercion and aggression which caused fitnah (disorder) in the history of Islam.

Traces of Coercion and Aggression in Islam

“Disorder (Fitnah) was and remains a primary political and social evil,”² Esposito writes in his book *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. While digging deep into the social misrepresentations in Islamic societies, one finds coercive bid'at (deviations). The signing of the Hudaibiya Peace Treaty, as has been discussed in the previous chapter, caused doubts in the minds of some aggressive Muslims who wanted the Prophet (SAWA) to deal

² Esposito, John L. (2003), *Unholy War, Terror in the Name of Islam*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pg. 36

with Banu Quraish aggressively. Even Umar Ibn Khattab dared³ to question the Prophet (SAWA), asking if He was really a Messenger. Al Bukhari quotes Umer Ibn Khattab asking Prophet (SAWA), “Aren't you truly the Messenger of Allah?,”⁴ while the companions did not even respond to the Prophet (SAWA)’s call commanding them to shave heads and sacrifice on the day of Eid al Adha. “By Allah none of them got up, and the Prophet [SAWA], repeated his order thrice. When none of them got up, he left them...,”⁵ in grief for their attitude.

The same aggression can be observed at the time when the Holy Prophet (SAWA) wanted to write His Will to declare a clear line of succession with the purpose of avoiding fitnah. “Aatuni be dawatin wa qirtasin iktubu lakum kitaban lan tadhilu ba’dahu abada (Fetch me an inkwell and a paper. I write a Will for you so that you do not deviate, later [after me]).”⁶ The purpose was very clear, that the Muslims would not indulge in contradictions regarding that which had been announced already on 18 Zilhaj 10AH (16 March 632 AD) at the place of Ghadeer e Khum, on the way back to Madina after performing the last Hajj.⁷ According to that announcement, Prophet (SAWA) declared Ali (as) to the Muslims just as He himself was to them in the following words: “Mun koontu Maula fahaza Aliun Maula (Ali is the Maula (leader) to all whom I am the Maula).”⁸ And that time all companions, including Abu Bakar, Umer ibn Kattab, Uthman among them, congratulated Ali (as) and gave allegiance at his hand as commanded by the Holy Prophet (SAWA). But later on Ibn Khattab said that there was no need to write a Will, declaring the Book of Allah (Quran) suffices for

³ Armstrong, Karen (10 Sep 1993), Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet, 1st Paperback edition, Harper Collins Publishes Inc., New York, pg. 211-250

⁴ Al Bukhari, Imam Abi Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail(194-256 A.H) , (810-870 A.D) , Translated by: Khan, Muhammad Muhsin (2013), The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al Bukhari: Arabic-English, 3rd Edition, Darussalam Publishers and Distributers, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Vol. 3, pg. 527-536, Hadith No. 2731 & 2732

⁵ Al Bukhari, Imam Abi Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail(194-256 A.H) , (810-870 A.D) , Translated by: Khan, Muhammad Muhsin (2013), The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al Bukhari: Arabic-English, 3rd Edition, Darussalam Publishers and Distributers, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Vol. 3, pg. 527-536, Hadith No. 2731 & 2732

See also, Sahih Muslim, Tirmadhi Shareef

⁶ Al Bukhari, Imam Abi Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail(194-256 A.H) , (810-870 A.D) , Translated by: Khan, Muhammad Muhsin (2013), The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al Bukhari: Arabic-English, 3rd Edition, Darussalam Publishers and Distributers, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Vol. 7, Hadith No. 5669

⁷ Ibn Al-Hajjaj, Muslim (817/818 - 874/875), Translated by Abd-al-Hamid Siddiqui (2000: 1st edition Edited by: Mika'il al-Almany Created: 2009-10-02, Last modified: 2009-11-05), Sahih Muslim, Kitab Bhawan Publishers, Hadith No. 2625-2628, also see Sahih Bukhari, and [Event of Ghadir Khumm](#)

⁸ Ibn Al-Hajjaj, Muslim (817/818 - 874/875), Translated by Abd-al-Hamid Siddiqui (2000: 1st edition Edited by: Mika'il al-Almany Created: 2009-10-02, Last modified: 2009-11-05), Sahih Muslim, Kitab Bhawan Publishers, Hadith No. 2625-2628, also see Sahih Bukhari, and [Event of Ghadir Khumm](#)

guidance, adding “The Prophet is speaking in delirium.”⁹ Upon hearing this, the Ahl-al Beit became irritated and opposed Ibn Khattab, arguing that if Allah’s Apostle (SAWA) wanted to write the Will, why stop Him? This argument divided the companions into two groups; some endorsed Ibn Khattab while others endorsed providing paper and pen to the Prophet (SAWA) as He demanded.¹⁰ The heated argument disturbed Holy Prophet (SAWA) and He commanded them to “Get away,”¹¹ reminding them of the Quranic command of not raising one’s voice in front of Prophet (SAWA) out of respect.¹² This intentionally-created obstacle for writing a Will resulted in perpetual internal contentions following His (SAWA) demise. Sunni sections of the Muslims give credence to Ibn Khattab’s intentions, with the excuse that he did so out of concern for the Prophet (SAWA)’s health and to avoid disturbance,¹³ while the Shia strongly believe in the idea that Ibn Khattab intentionally did that to avoid Imam Ali (as)’s succession announcement in writing, endorsing the verbal announcement on the day of Ghadeer,¹⁴ as well as the use of the word ‘delirium’ regarding the Holy Prophet (SAWA) as blasphemy because Allah declares in the Quran that Prophet (SAWA) says or does nothing but as commanded by Allah. Henceforth, the Muslims divided into two sects, those who condemned Ibn Khattab’s act of obstruction against a written Will, later recognised as Shian e Ali¹⁵ or Shiites, while the others named themselves Sunnits. Here, it is significant to mention that the majority of Sunni scholars confess that it was better to have Prophet (SAWA)’s Will in written form, which could be helpful in avoiding many divisions and contradictions among

⁹ Al Bukhari, Imam Abi Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail(194-256 A.H) , (810-870 A.D) , Translated by: Khan, Muhammad Muhsin (2013), The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al Bukhari: Arabic-English, 3rd Edition, Darussalam Publishers and Distributers, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Vol. 7, Hadith No. 5669, repeated also Hadith No. 4431-4432, See also Ibn Al-Hajjaj’s Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 4232 & 4234, See also Mishkat, Hadith No. 5966

¹⁰ Al Bukhari, Imam Abi Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail(194-256 A.H) , (810-870 A.D) , Translated by: Khan, Muhammad Muhsin (2013), The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al Bukhari: Arabic-English, 3rd Edition, Darussalam Publishers and Distributers, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Vol. 7, Hadith No. 5669, repeated also Vol. 5, Hadith No. 4431-4432

¹¹ Al Bukhari, Imam Abi Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail(194-256 A.H) , (810-870 A.D) , Translated by: Khan, Muhammad Muhsin (2013), The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al Bukhari: Arabic-English, 3rd Edition, Darussalam Publishers and Distributers, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Vol. 7, Hadith No. 5669, repeated also Hadith No. 4431-4432

¹² Holy Quran, Surah Al Hujurat, Verse No. 2, See also Verse No. 1, 3, 4, 5

¹³ Ishaq, Maulana (31 August 2015), Pen and paper hadith, Moulana ishaq Urdu, channel Khanwade Abutalib, [Youtube.Com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

¹⁴ This day is celebrated by Shias as Eid e Ghadeer

¹⁵ The group of people who follow Ali (as) after Prophet (SAWA)

the Muslim Ummah. Maulana Shibli Naumani, a well-known scholar of the subcontinent, found a way to get rid of this bone of contention by denying the truthfulness of this hadith in his book *Al Farooq*. That act of denial faced severe criticism from all around the subcontinent with a strong argument that a truthful hadith cannot be denied merely with a purpose to give a clean chit to Ibn Khattab.¹⁶ The criticism compelled Naumani to correct himself but with a promise to release Ibn Khattab from this charge by declaring his act as an unintentional mistake instead of an intentional blunder.¹⁷ Naumani's attempted denial of a factual truth is one of the innumerable forgeries that I call misrepresentations.

The third example of aggression in the history of Islam that provided space for violence and misrepresentations is the event of Saqifa soon after Holy Prophet (SAWA)'s demise in 632 AD, but before His funeral arrangements. Saqifa Bani Sa'ida was a central meeting point of the local Muslims of Madina known as Ansar. Hearing the news of Holy Prophet (SAWA)'s demise, Ansar gathered at Saqifa. When Ibn Khattab heard the news of their gathering and gossiping about succession, he called upon Abu Bakar and both proceeded to Saqifa, leaving Prophet (SAWA)'s funeral arrangements right there. There, Ansar had the view that there should be two leaders of the Muslims, one from muhajireen (immigrants) companions of the Prophet (SAWA) and another from among the Ansar of Madinah. Abu Bakar was among the immigrants, and responded to Ansar, "We are rulers and you are ministers,"¹⁸ a deal which the Ansar were not ready to accept. A long argument followed, then Abu Bakar repeated with an argument in favour of the immigrants by highlighting their privilege of belonging to Banu Quraish which was, according to Abu Bakar, "the best family amongst the Arabs and of best origin;"¹⁹ Thus, Ansar had to elect one of the immigrants as their ruler. Sa'ad Bin Ubaidah initially tried to remind the people there about the Prophet (SAWA)'s declaration in Ali (as)'s favour, but in vain. Then he was nominated by Ansar as their ruler while Muhajireen were left open to decide for theirs. The

¹⁶ Ishaq, Maulana (31 August 2015), Pen and paper hadith, Moulana ishaq Urdu, channel Khanwade Abutalib, [Youtube.Com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

¹⁷ Also narrated by an anonymous scholar interviewed during fieldwork

¹⁸ Al Bukhari, Imam Abi Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail(194-256 A.H) , (810-870 A.D) , Translated by: Khan, Muhammad Muhsin (2013), *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al Bukhari: Arabic-English*, 3rd Edition, Darussalam Publishers and Distributers, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Vol 5, Hadith No. 3668 (here it is a curtailed version of hadith)

¹⁹ Al Bukhari, Imam Abi Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail(194-256 A.H) , (810-870 A.D) , Translated by: Khan, Muhammad Muhsin (2013), *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al Bukhari: Arabic-English*, 3rd Edition, Darussalam Publishers and Distributers, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Vol 5, Hadith No. 3668 (here it is a curtailed version of hadith)

argument continued and a consensus could not be developed. All of a sudden, Ibn Khattab took out his sword and said, “I pledge my allegiance to Abu Bakar”²⁰ adding that whoever would not do likewise would be killed. The situation turned violent and Bin Ubaida was killed. Abu Bakar’s speech there at Saqifa was the first ever violation of the concept of equality in Islam that allows no discrimination regarding caste, colour, or creed with the argument, ‘we belong to Banu Quraish thus are superior’ and the enforced allegiance of the Muslims present in favour of Abu Bakar’s succession as caliph was the first undemocratic dictatorship of an Islamic State. None of them participated in the Prophet (SAWA)’s funeral prayer that was offered only by 7 (some historians number it 11) members of Banu Hashim, the Prophet (SAWA)’s progeny. So, the power politics started immediately after the Prophet (SAWA)’s demise, which led the rulers to get involved in expanding the geographical boundaries with the goal of expanding the domain of their power rather than spreading Islam through peaceful means. This same kind of Islamic history was witnessed in Jamal, Safeen, Karbala, Syria where the Holy Prophet (SAWA)’s Ahl-al Beit (Holy Progeny)²¹ was assassinated and humiliated. The two most important things He left among the Ummah were the Quran and the Ahl-al Beit. The Ahl-al Beit, about whom He (SAWA) advised the Muslims to defend and to remain connected with for righteous guidance about Islam.²² And this same power politics misrepresented the Ahl-al Beit as deviants to the people. In the Friday sermons, the same Ahl-al Beit had been abused and accused of deviance for 80 long years, starting from 658 AD in Syria. At the news of Ali (as)’s Martyrdom in the Mosque in about 662 AD, Syrians expressed their astonishment, asking what he was doing in a Mosque when he was a deviant.²³ The same Ahl-al Beit were butchered on the battlefield of Karbala in 680 AD, the women and children were made captives and stoned in the streets of Syria with shouts of ‘khawarij! khawarij!’ meaning deviants, ignoring the Islamic commands to treat women and children gently even during warfare, as has been discussed in the previous

²⁰ Al Bukhari, Imam Abi Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail(194-256 A.H) , (810-870 A.D) , Translated by: Khan, Muhammad Muhsin (2013), The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al Bukhari: Arabic-English, 3rd Edition, Darussalam Publishers and Distributors, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Vol 5, Hadith No. 3668 (here it is a curtailed version of hadith) repeated with detailed version

²¹ Holy Quran, Surah Al Ahzab, Verse No. 33

²² Ibn Al-Hajjaj, Muslim (817/818 - 874/875), Translated by Abd-al-Hamid Siddiqui (2000: 1st edition Edited by: Mika'il al-Almany Created: 2009-10-02, Last modified: 2009-11-05), Sahih Muslim, Kitab Bhawan Publishers, Hadith No. 2625-2628, also see Sahih Bukhari, and [Event of Ghadir Khumm](#)

²³ Alvi, Asif Raza (13 Dec 2018), Muavia or Sham Mai Islam k Halat by Allama Asif Raza Alvi, Published by Ali Syed on [Youtube.Com](#)

chapter.

Abandoning Ahl-al Beit for the throne brought people with lesser knowledge about Prophet (SAWA) and His Message of Peace to power, and led to aggression and violent ‘Apostasy wars’ that bred extremism which, as we have said, is opposed to Islam’s basic concept of peace for all. The problem for the majority of Muslims is that some groups are following traditions and superstitions invented centuries after the Quran was first revealed and the Prophet’s own lifetime, and these indoctrinated superstitions have become more radical over time. “And do not transgress, God dislikes the aggressors,”²⁴ is a clear message in the Quran to be tolerant and patient because He does not like transgression, aggression and oppression. There are verses in which Allah encourages us to forgive the wrongdoers and to stay away from ignorants who could test our tolerance. Allah says, “You should resort to pardon, advocate tolerance, and disregard the ignorant.”²⁵ The relations of Muslims with others are based primarily on peace, mutual respect and trust. The theme in the Quran is peace as long as there is no oppression or injustice that cannot be resolved by peaceful means. How do extremists succeed then in sowing coercive ideologies which produce radical bigots and fanatics as stains on the face of Islam?

The fieldwork conducted in Iraq, Iran and Pakistan, with a goal of locating the misconceptions or misperceptions of the people regarding Islam, helped in determining the findings regarding the hypothesis upon which the research is based. Overall results generally endorse the hypothesis regarding familiarised concepts through religious misrepresentation and their role in breeding violence. However, expectations do not always come true completely, as there can be surprises and there are indeed some surprising results as we will see during detailed discussion.

The cities visited include Najaf, Karbala, Musayyab, Hilla, Balad, Samrah, Kadhimiya, Kufa along with some small towns and villages while travelling in Iraq, Tehran, Qom, Mashhad, Jamkaran, Hamdan, Kashan, Isfahan, Kirmanshah, Naishbur, Kashmar, Sabzawar, Bojnord, Qazvin and Zanjan in Iran, and Lahore, Karachi, Faisalabad, Sahiwal²⁶, Pakpattan, Burewala, Muzaffarabad and Multan in Pakistan, as are shown on the map.

²⁴ Holy Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse No. 190 (See also verse No. 191), Repeated in Surah Al Maida, Verse No. 87

²⁵ Holy Quran, Surah Al-A’raaf, Verse No. 199

²⁶ Sahiwal is my hometown, the city where I was born, brought up, educated from grade 1 to Masters, served as a teacher, got married and to which I will be returning soon, InShaAllah.



27 Map indicates the cities visited during fieldwork in Iraq Iran and Pakistan. The shaded squares indicate the most dangerous cities in Iraq which had been once under control of ISIS/ISIL

Balad²⁸ and Samrah were attacked and almost captured by ISIS, which almost succeeded in entering Kadhimiya, too. However, these cities were under the control of Iraqi forces at the time of the visit. The road going through danger zones was not recommended to foreigners, thus we joined a convoy of pilgrims to avoid any mishap and, Alhamdulillah, nothing bad happened throughout the journey of exploration. As it was the sacred month of Muharram according to the Islamic calendar, we did not need to buy food, in fact, folks were pleading to host travellers with food stalls and edibles of all kinds: tea, juices, fruits, dry fruits, snacks, a variety of cooked packed meals and such. Their hospitality was inspirational in this age of capitalism, when people try to make money from the foreigners during tourism, whereas they were providing free food and services. One would never imagine that they are the people who are victims of both neoliberals' transgressions and Islamists's terrorism. They are neither liberals nor fundamentalists, thus neither neoliberals nor Islamists. They are

²⁷ Special thanks to Pascal Brunello for his cooperation for drafting the map, indicating all the cities travelled to during fieldwork

²⁸ The city of my forefathers. Sayed Muhammad whose shrine was bombed by ISIS on July 8, 2016, was my grandfather in direct lineage

Muslim. They follow Islam. They have compassion for humanity. They are genuine humanists.

Survey Criterion and Framework (Information about the participants)

Total number of participants : 150 (50 in each country) Gender: both male and female, in relatively equal numbers Age group: between 25 to 70 years

Community: Literate Muslims with a certain basic understanding of Islam since they are living around the religious sites.

Locality: Pakistan, Iraq and Iran (the societies most obviously affected by Fundamentalism, especially within the Pakistani context of the thesis). It is important to mention that being a fundamentalist state, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) was also a part of the initial plan for conducting the fieldwork, but the researcher was not granted permission by Saudi embassy to conduct any sort of activity or survey in their state that could relatively be controversial against the fundamental ideologies of the state.

Purpose: to discover the popular perceptions of religious misrepresentations through obtaining more objective data regarding of the current ideology of fundamentalism being espoused by the Islamists in comparison with the original message of Islam elaborated in chapter 4.

The Rationale behind the Choice of questions or Statements:

A questionnaire was formed to collect data regarding selected topics. It comprised ten statements covering the five above-mentioned topics to cross check the understanding of the common people regarding the most misrepresented concepts of Islam. All ten statements were derived from the Quran or Hadith without referencing. Some statements were intentionally constructed as opposite to the meaning to the Quran or Hadith, in a negative manner, the purpose being to cross check the participants' own understanding of the question, in order to test:

1. If they believe in Islam as a religion of peace, free will and forbidding coercion, then how do they perceive the extremists' ideology of Jihad bil Saif to spread Islam.
2. If they consider Jihad bil Saif as a main method of spreading Islam instead of only being permitted against oppression or in defence. Then what is the status of Jihad bil Ilm and self accountability i.e. greater Jihad to them.
3. If they agree that the religious managers, such as scholars, mujtahid, molvi, mufti, maulana

(including religious quacks) have ultimate authority regarding Islam and should not be questioned, then how do they interpret the well-known ‘there are signs for those who ponder over’ call to human reasoning, time and again in the Quran.

4. If they endorse that the Holy Prophet (SAWA) used to forgive blasphemers, dealing with them with tolerance and patience, then how do they justify a zero-tolerance for blasphemy.
5. If they believe in Islam as a religion of humanity, then what is their concept about Abdul Satta Eidhi’s famous quote, ‘no religion is above humanity’.

Or vice versa for the opposite opinions, as a means of verifying the coherence of responses; for details, see the questionnaires below. Interviews from religious scholars as well as religious quacks were also based on this questionnaire, pursuing the follow-up questions derived from the answers. A model of the questionnaire is given, while results will be shared one by one under the headings of the five aforementioned concepts.

Sample Questionnaire

Name: _____ Signature _____

Sr.#	Stated Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	‘No religion is above humanity’.					
2	Blasphemy law (with blasphemer’s death penalty) is exactly according to Islam. Zero tolerance for blasphemers!					
3	Jihad Bil-Saif (struggle through sword) is a command of God to spread Islam.					
4	The common Muslims must not question or contradict the scholars/clerics’ declarations.					
5	There is an answer to every question					

	for those who ponder in search of truth.					
6	Islam is a religion of humanity.					
7	To spread Islam, Holy Prophet (SAWA)’s preaching of Islam through awareness is called Jihad Bil-Ilm (struggle through spreading knowledge and awareness).					
8	‘No compulsion in religion’ indicates that any coercive act to spread Islam or to practice Islam is forbidden in Islam.					
9	Holy Prophet (peace be upon Him) used to forgive and pray for God’s mercy upon His blasphemers. He never even allowed His companions to react harshly against them.					
10	Jihad Bil-Saif (struggle with sword) is a command of God permitted only for self defence and against oppression.					

Concept of Humanity in the Views of Common Muslims:

We have discussed the fundamentals of Islam in a previous chapter in light of the Quran and hadith and found that Islam is founded on compassion for humanity. Humanity is a phenomenon that makes a social animal humane by raising humankind’s moral approach higher than greed and selfishness, with full of compassion and sensitivity not only towards other humans but also towards animals, plants and nature. We have narrated earlier a number of Quranic verses and hadiths proving the compassionate approach of Islam regarding humanity. Khwaja Meer Dard, a well-known Muslim Sufi poet of the subcontinent, declares the ultimate status of humanity as the foundation of Islam through his poetry, speeches, letters and writings. One of the most often recited verses is the following, highlighting the purpose of humankind’s creation:

Dard - e - dil kay wastay paida kiya insaan ko Warna ata'at kay liye kuch kam na thay karobiyan
Translation:

The reason for creation of Humans is to Love and Compassion for others Else, for obedience, the angels did not have a match.

That means Allah did not want human beings to remain all the time busy in worship, instead they are created to have compassion, sensitivity and pain for all other creatures and not only to worship God. For Allah's obedience, loyalty and worship, He already had a large number of angels who are always obedient to Him because per their creation, they do not have any instinctive desire to be seduced by anything that would deviate them from their Lord.

Molna Altaf Hussain Hali, another eminent Muslim Sufi poet expresses the same idea in the following words:

“Yehi Hey Ibadat, Yehi Deen-O-Eemaan

Keh Kaam Aye Duniya Main Insaan Kay Insaan”

Translation: The real worship, faith and religion is to be helpful for others. He also versed Allah's message in Quran as:

Yeh Pehla Sabaq Tha, Kitaab-E-Khuda Ka K Hai Sari Makhlooq, Kunmba Khuda Ka Wohi Dost
Hai Maalik-E-Do-Saraa Ka Khalaaiq Say Hai Jis Ko Rishta Wilaah Ka Translation:

The first lesson of Allah's Book (Quran) was That all creatures of the world are like one family The friend of the Creator is only the one

Who feels compassionate connections towards all the creatures.

This is the message almost all Muslim Sufi poets and writers share and which is in line with the concept of human compassion as the base of Islam.

In this regard, the results of the fieldwork survey are very interesting as well as (almost) according to expectations. The two assertions ‘no religion is above humanity’ and ‘Islam is a religion of humanity’ were stated to check the understanding of the common, well-educated Muslims. The first statement is a famous quote from Abdul Sattar Edhi, a world famous humanitarian and founder of Edhi Foundation, who had been criticised by extremist fundamentalists²⁹ for this statement, declaring it an act of downgrading Islam. He had also been criticised for his indiscriminate help for all humans, irrespective of religion, caste or creed, the critics reasoning that the charity donated by Muslims should be spent on Muslims only. The third logic of criticising him was his act of parenting kids, adopting legally those who are placed in the Edhi Baby Carts by anonymous people. Edhi initiated this idea of placing baby carts outside the building of Edhi foundation when many horrible incidents, one after another, overwhelmed mainstream media reporting that the infants were found on piles of garbage in different cities, some dead and some half dead. There could be two possible reasons: one, most probably, the illegitimate children of unmarried mothers who could not keep their babies, or two, the dire poverty of the parents who

could not financially afford to raise these infants. There are many examples of parents killing their children because of dreadful poverty. Umaira Ahmed, in her novel Aab e Hayat, highlights the same poverty that leads Ghulam Fareed to brutally kill his wife and children. Similarly, she also highlights the brutal act of twin infants found on a garbage pile, adopted by Fatima, a Muslim humanist, in her novel Thora Sa Asman. Edhi, as a humanitarian, took the initiative to place baby carts with a message ‘Don’t throw your infants on the pile of garbage if you cannot own or raise them, we will.’ This way he became the legal father of hundreds of kids whose biological parents are anonymous. The criticism was, and still is, that Edhi’s this act encourages adultery and illegitimate pregnancies,³⁰ disregarding the fact that the infants are not at fault. Thus they announced a fatwa that donating to the Edhi Foundation is haram so Muslims should abandon donations to Edhi Foundation, whereas their own Madrassahs deserve all donations.³¹ However, there are religious scholars who came forward in Edhi’s robust defence,³² warning extremists to rescind such an unislamic fatwa, exposing their real agenda of propagating criticism in search of charity and donations.

Moving towards the collected data, 99.33% of the participants endorsed Islam as a religion of humanity with zero % disagreement while 0.67% did not take a certain position, most probably, confused by the sense of the statement. The results are according to

²⁹ Khan, Mufti Zarwali (10 July 2016), Mufti Zarwali Khan: Edhi Jahanam Mein Jaye Ga, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

³⁰ Rizvi, Khadim Hussain (15 Oct 2016), Allama Khadim Hussain Rizvi about Sattar Eidhi, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

³¹ Khan, Mufti Zarwali (10 July 2016), Mufti Zarwali Khan: Edhi Jahanam Mein Jaye Ga, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

³² Mirza, Engineer Muhammad Ali (24 July 2016), Abdul Sattar EDHI Sb. say motalliq Mufti ZARR WALI Sb. ki GANDI Statement ka ILMI-o-ILZAMI JAWAB, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

expectations, endorsing my stance that Islam is perceived as a religion of humanity and not of terrorism. However, Edhi's slogan-quote is endorsed by 68% of the participants with 4% disagreement while 28% neither agree nor disagree, which reveals that a reasonable number of people are confused about this idea, and of course because of the above-mentioned criticism from the religious managers (whom I call religious quacks) who have certain influential effects on the minds of the common people.

S r. #	Stated Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	'No religion is above humanity'.	19 = 12.67%	83 = 55.33%	42 = 28%	05 = 3.33%	01 = 0.67%
2	Islam is a religion of humanity.	149 = 99.33%		1 = 0.67%	0%	0%

Accumulative Result:

S r. #	Stated Questions	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree
	'No religion is above humanity'.	102 = 68 %	42 = 28%	06 = 4%
2	Islam is a religion of humanity.	149 = 99.33%	1 = 0.67%	0%

Moreover, a large number of participants wrote ‘except Islam’, ‘but Islam’, ‘siwaiey (except) Islam’, ‘illa (except) Islam,’ types of short phrases in addition to the ticks in the column of their choice while agreeing with the statement ‘no religion is above humanity’. This reminds me of the answers from the interviewed molvis and scholars to this statement. Most of the scholars began their answers by expressing their reservations regarding the definition of humanity. An anonymous scholar began like this, “Well, it depends upon what your concept of humanity is.” He later explained that the western concept of capitalistic humanity with an advocacy of freedom of even hurtful speech is a certain violation of others’ freedom of listening, thus is impermissible in Islam. He described the Islamic concept of humanity as based upon selflessness, care, love and respect for all creatures including animals. We are born two legged animals then our acquisition of social and moral values transforms our instinctive animalism into humanism. Humanity in Islam does not allow anyone to be disrespectful or hurtful or humiliate others. In this manner, no religion is above humanity and Islam, founded upon a conception of humanity as “equivalent rather than synonymous” with its Islamic definition.

Concept of Jihad

The results of the surveys conducted in Iraq, Iran and Pakistan indicate that 100 percent of educated Muslims who took part in the survey, believe that Jihad bil Ilm is Jihad e Akbar (greater struggle) and to spread the message of Islam, Muslims are commanded by Allah Almighty and Holy Prophet (SAWA) to struggle for enlightenment through awareness. Similarly, the use of Jihad bil Saif or an armed struggle to fight against oppression is endorsed by 100% of the participants of the survey. However, the result of the second question reveals that there is a small fraction of 6.67 % among the literate people too, who believe that Muslims should do Jihad bil Saif for spreading Islam. It shows how effectively the coercive concept of Jihad for spreading Islam has been familiarised in the minds of the common people. The people generally know that struggle through awareness is the best way to understand Islam but still are confused regarding Jihad bil Saif. They all agree, on one side, that Jihad bil Saif is permissible only against oppression or in self defence but, on the other side, few favour its use for spreading Islam. A minority indeed, though it is alarming in the sense that the percentage may be higher among illiterate Muslims. (The questionnaire may be redeployed to include illiterate sections of the societies in future research projects because we may find very different answers from a population educated at madrassahs or totally dependent on the Molvis’ guidance, who could possibly be quacks or radicalised.).

S r. #	Stated Questions Regarding Jihad	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

1	Jihad Bil-Saif (struggle through sword) is a command of God to spread Islam.	01 = 0.67%	09 = 6%	0%	62 = 41.33	78 = 52%
2	To spread Islam, Holy Prophet (SAWA)'s preaching of Islam through awareness is called Jihad Bil-Ilm (struggle through spreading knowledge and awareness).	144 = 96%	06 = 4%	0%	0%	0%
3	Jihad Bil-Saif (struggle with sword) is a command of God permitted only for self defence and against oppression.	148 = 98.67 %	02 = 1.33 %	0%	0%	0%

Accumulative Result:

S r. #	Stated Questions Regarding Jihad	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree
1	Jihad Bil-Saif (struggle through sword) is a command of God to spread Islam	10 = 6.67 %	0%	140 = 93.33 %
2	To spread Islam, Holy Prophet (SAWA)'s preaching of Islam through awareness is called Jihad Bil-Ilm (struggle through spreading knowledge and awareness)	150 = 100 %	0%	0%

3	Jihad Bil-Saif (struggle with sword) is a command of God permitted only for self defence and against oppression.	150 = 100%	0%	0%
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“Jihad is obligatory” was an instant response by an anonymous molvi with Pakistani origins, in Najaf, Iraq, to the question, “What is Jihad in Islam?” The reply baffled me, not because the statement was totally wrong or inappropriate but because my simplest question was answered without even being understood. It was like an Urdu proverb, ‘sawal gandum, jawab chana’ (question about wheat, response about gram). I repeated my question, clarifying for him that the question is about how he defines Jihad and not about its status as obligatory or non-obligatory. He gave a long statement explaining Jihad: when it was fought, how should it be fought, to whom it is obligatory, how Allah encourages in the Quran to fight in His way, what is the reward Allah promised, which hadiths explain it. There were two things, firstly, his explanation was revolving around only one type of Jihad in the sense of armed fighting and secondly, the answer to my question was missing. I repeated thrice but he could not define Jihad, regarding types of Jihad or Jihad e Akbar (greater Jihad) or Jihad e Asghar (minor Jihad). Then I realised that he probably did not know the definition of Jihad. A molvi who was lecturing people about Jihad has never tried to know what Jihad actually means in Islam. This was a verification of my hypothesis, that Islam is misrepresented and not all the molvis are theologically literate enough to be able to answer even the simplest question of definitions or sometimes they intentionally focus upon the cherry-picked, self-serving concepts. The molvis who are influential figures in the societies, with the authority to pronounce verdicts regarding Islam; the molvis who are consulted by the common people for guidance regarding Islam. An Islam they themselves are not aware of comprehensively or are intentionally distorting. As to the question of why even a few people (6.67%) think so, is because of the terrorists’ campaign of misinformation.

Here I would also like to share the inspirational determination of the people of Iraq against terrorism and the terrorists of ISIS. Particularly the people of Balad and Samrah, the cities which were under the control of ISIS until just a few weeks before my visit. I saw the ruined buildings all around. I heard Arabic inspirational songs with lyrics which have messages calling for all to be united against ISIS. I found them simple, humble, hospitable, cooperative and peaceful towards each other, towards foreigners but very resilient towards terrorists and terrorism. People were very respectful towards their soldiers fighting against the terrorism of ISIS. I met many women who have lost their husbands or sons or brothers in Jihad against ISIS, but were not afraid of sending remaining family members to do so; the genuine Jihad, the struggle against oppression, the struggle against terrorism, the struggle for their own peoples’ security, the struggle against ISIS - the terrorists. There I was able to differentiate between the terrorists who disguise themselves as so-called jihadists and the mujahideen in its true sense of Islam. The terrorists are tyrants. The mujahideen fighting against these terrorists are saviors.

Conclusion

This study has examined the conceptual, historical, and interpretive layers that shape contemporary understandings of jihad, highlighting how the term has been repeatedly reconfigured through political, colonial, and postcolonial discourses. By tracing these shifts, the analysis underscores the extent to which dominant narratives have obscured the ethical, spiritual, and socio-moral dimensions originally embedded within the Islamic tradition. The discussion demonstrates that the meaning of jihad cannot be reduced to singular or violent interpretations without distorting its broader theological and philosophical foundations.

The argument presented here ultimately reveals the need for a re-engagement with indigenous epistemologies that restore the nuance and plurality inherent in classical Islamic thought. This requires not only textual reconsideration but also a critical awareness of the power dynamics that have shaped global perceptions of Islam.

The next part of this work will therefore focus on a decolonized reconstruction of the concept of jihad - a representation grounded in Islamic intellectual history, socio-ethical praxis, and the lived realities of Muslim communities. By reframing jihad through decolonial and context-sensitive perspectives, Part II aims to offer a more balanced, holistic, and authentic understanding that challenges reductive narratives and contributes to a more equitable global discourse on Islam.