

Chapter Two

Towards a Qur'anically-Based Articulation of the Concept of a "Just War"

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The popular conception of jihad as "holy war" has been fostered by a rising tide of anti-Islam propaganda from a variety of pseudo-scholars.⁹ Both non-Muslims and Muslims illustrate misunderstanding of the term. The propagandists portray Islam as inherently violent, and the militants react with violence to what they see as attacks against Islam. What gets lost in between the deeds of militants and the words of propagandists is any sense of the Qur'anic usage of the word jihad and how it may or may not relate to armed conflict. The challenge facing us today is to derive an authentic Qur'an-based understanding of jihad and determine how that understanding governs its relationship to armed conflict, in order to articulate Qur'an-based principles of what may be called 'just war.' This chapter proposes a literal and holistic analysis of the text from a contemporary perspective and applying the exegetical principle of *tafsīr al-qur'ān bi al-qur'ān* (explaining the Qur'an with the Qur'an)¹⁰ and the jurisprudential principle *al-aṣl fī al-kalām al-ḥaqīqah* (the fundamental rule of speech is literalness).¹¹

It is important to seek a Qur'anic perspective on the question of jihad because Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the Book of God and the ultimate authority that defines the beliefs and practices of Islam. All other sources are informed by it and are subordinate to it. Interpretation and explanation of the Qur'an, therefore, begins with the Qur'an itself, proceeding from the idea that some parts of the Qur'an explain others and that principles elaborated through such a holistic analysis can be used in conjunction with information from other sources such as the prophetic traditions (hadith) and biographical literature (*sīrah*) to formulate viable Islamic responses to contemporary situations.

When the Qur'an addresses fighting, it does not use the word jihad. It uses the word *qitāl*. There is no concept of holy war (*al-ḥarb al-muqaddasah*) in the Qur'an. Although the term jihad is often understood to refer to war, the Qur'an always uses it in a much broader context. When the Qur'an refers directly to war, the term it uses most often is *qitāl*. The noun jihad occurs only four times in the Qur'an. The verb *jāhada* (to struggle, strive) in various forms appears 31 times.¹² None refer directly to fighting or military action. In 14 of the 31

occurrences that the verb *jāhada* appears in the Qur'an, striving in the cause of God is used in a very general context as a quality of those who believe.

The broad, general usage of *jāhada* in the Qur'an led classical Muslim jurists to recognize four kinds of jihad: There is jihad of the heart, jihad of the tongue, and jihad of the hand, and jihad of the sword. The first of these, the effort to purify one's heart from the influences of the devil, is considered the greater jihad. Jihad of the tongue and hand are understood to refer to persuasive missionary efforts and doing good deeds, and jihad of the sword refers specifically to the use of just and necessary violence.¹³ While the use of just and necessary violence is one particular form of jihad, the term jihad is not synonymous with fighting.

Like the word jihad, the word *qitāl*, is a form III verbal noun. Its root is *q-t-l*, which carries the basic meaning of "to cause death/kill."¹⁴ The root *q-t-l* appears 170 times in 122 verses of the Qur'an.¹⁵ Of these occurrences, the word *qitāl* (fighting) itself appears 13 times in 10 verses, while its corresponding noun *qātala/yaqātilu* appears 52 times. The word *qātala* (kill) in its various conjugations and together with its verbal noun (*qatl*) appears 98 times in 77 verses. The general Qur'anic ruling about killing is articulated in verse 17:33:

And do not take any human being's life – [the life] which God has willed to be, sacred – otherwise than in [the pursuit of] justice....

Verse 5:32 states:

... if anyone slays a human being – unless it be [in punishment] for murder or for spreading corruption on earth – it shall be as though he had slain all mankind; whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind.

Taking a single life, in the absence of one of these conditions, is morally equal to killing the human race in its entirety, according to the Qur'an.

Using some parts of the Qur'an to explain others on the question of struggle (jihad) and fighting (*qitāl*), four general principles become clear. Fighting is sometimes necessary, aggression is forbidden, fighting is a response to specific types of aggression and injustice, and fighting ceases when the causes cease and the aggressors seek peace. These

principles would form a Qur'an-based framework in which Muslim scholars can elaborate a detailed theory of justifications for war and just conduct of war in the contemporary period, which takes into account details from the prophetic Sunnah as well as contemporary political and social realities.

Chapter Three

Religious Pluralism and the Qur'an

Mahmoud Ayoub

The plurality and diversity of religions is a reflection of the plurality and diversity of cultures and civilizations. The Qur'anic worldview, with its emphasis on the diversity of human racial and cultural identities and man's innate capacity to know and have faith in God, recognizes the diverse religions of humankind as divinely preordained ways to this ultimate goal. Hence, I will first define pluralism religiously and philosophically. I will then attempt to contextualize it within the history of the civilizations of the Middle East. Finally, I will discuss religious pluralism in the Qur'an.

In its lexical usage, pluralism signifies plurality, as opposed to singularity. Plurality, moreover, implies difference and, hence, diversity. Theologically, the expression religious pluralism, must be distinguished from religious exclusivism on the one hand, and religious inclusivism on the other. Religious pluralism is the recognition of the multiplicity and diversity of religions as a natural or divinely willed phenomenon. Yet if religious pluralism is to serve as a meaningful framework of constructive dialogue among the followers of the various religions, all religions, or at least all theistic religions, must be recognized as legitimate ways to the truth or ultimate reality. All the major religions hold that the truth is one and that it transcends human understanding. Yet, since the goal of all religions is to seek the truth, they must all be ways to that goal, for "...to God do we belong, and to Him we shall return" (2:156).

Among all the scriptures of the theistic religions, the Qur'an is unique in that it sets its worldview within the context of divine oneness and human diversity, including the plurality of religions. Furthermore, it regards religious diversity as one of the signs (*āyāt*) of God, second in importance to the "creation of the heavens and earth."¹⁶ It also presents