

## Jihad in Islam

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### Abstract

The word Islam as a verbal form is derived from the infinitive Arabic trilateral root of *silm*, *salamet* (peace and security). Therefore, if its nature has been peace and salvation, how can we interpret *Jihad* verses? The subject of this article focuses on this point. In this article, the writer discusses the subject and the impact of this apparent paradox on the direction of Islam according to Quranic verses. The interpretation of *Jihad* that the writer intends to explore best fits the religion which in its nature is peace and salvation.

**Keywords:** Verse; Jihad; Revealed Cause; War

### Introduction

The Arabic word *Jihad* is a very comprehensive term. It includes every kind of effort, exertion, conflict and war. The etymological origin of the word *Jihad* is derived from *j-h-d* which means striving one's utmost or exerting one's utmost power, efforts, endeavours, toil or hardwork and ability in contending with an object of disapprobation (Ibn Manzur, 1955; Al-Tahanawi, 1998; M'aluf, 1884; Baalbaki, 1997; Jamaatun, 1989; Steingasa, 1884). As the root of this word carries this meaning, *ijtihad*, which comes from the same root, is the spending of man's power to get meaning from works that require great effort to understand. For instance, saying *bazala juhдахu* in Arabic means that he exerts his utmost power. *Jihad* or *ijtihad* thus means, "striving one's utmost in any matter" (Firuzabadi, 1977; Az-Zabidi, undated).

*Al-Tahânawî* says that this is the reason why this word is especially being used for the hardness. The Arab people say "*Ijtahada fi hamli al-*

*hajar*" that is "*He struggled bearing the rock*". Otherwise they do not use this word for the easy works as "*Ijtahada fi hamli al-Khardala*" or "*He struggled bearing the mustard*" (At-Tahanavî, 1998). From the beginning, we have been told *Jahada ash-Shakhsu: Jadde, kana yajhadu li'an yukmila dirasatahu fi waktin mubakkirin. s'aa hatta wasala ila al-ghaya* or The man struggled (*Jadde, kana yajhadu*) to finish his lesson in early time and finally he reached to his aim (Jamaatun, 1989). So, *Jihad* refers to the maxim of struggle and sacrifice of a Muslim, physically, orally, mentally and materially, in the cause of Islam.

Therefore, *Jihad* not only means combat against enemies but also has other meanings. For this reason, *Jihad* in Hadith sources has used these meanings: (1) "*the (true) believer and he who struggles against his nature*" (Tirmidhi, 1992); (2) "*The most deserving fight is (to speak) just words before an iniquitous sovereign*" (Abu Daud, 1992; Tirmidhi, 1992); (3) "*Person's combat against his self or personality in serving his parent is Jihad*" (Bukhari, 1992; Muslim, 1992); (4) "*The best Jihad is accepted as pilgrimage to Macca*" (Bukhari, 1992) "*Mumin (Believer) combat by his sword and tongue*" (Ahmed Ibn Hanbal, 1992).

As it is seen this expression means to make an effort for Allah in many fields of life.

### The Aim of Jihad

In reality the doctrine of *Jihad* mobilizes and motivates Muslim people to protectiveness in all areas. This mobilization and motivation is strongly fed by the Quran. If a man acts in a way according to Qur'anic verses and gets God's consent he will be awarded with paradise.

*Jihad* manifests its true character in the Quran when it represents a move from aimlessness to an aim for the sake of Allah.

The characteristic term used in the Quran is “*Jihad fi sabilillah*” i.e. “*strive in the way of Allah*” This shows the aim of *Jihad* has to be for the sake of Allah, even if it is in war.

There are certain verses in the Qur’an conveying the command to do battle (*qital*) Al-Quran, 22:39-40. The first point in this connection is that the launching of an offensive by the believers is not totally forbidden, it is permissible with certain conditions. For example, “*Fight (faqtulu) in the way of Allah those who fight you (yuqatilukum) but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors*” (Al-Quran, 2:190). This clearly shows that defensive war is permitted in Islam. The believers are allowed to fight in self defence. According to the verse committing hostility is not permitted for Muslims.

In particular, there are two verses in the Qur’an which are normally quoted by those most eager to criticise Quranic teaching on war: “*Kill them wherever you come upon them, and drive them out from where they drove you out*” (Al-Quran, 2:191) and verse “*When the sacred months have passed, then kill (faqtulu) the idolaters wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush*” (Al-Quran, 9:5); the name of this last verse is *Sword Verse* (Al-Alusi, 1987; Al-Qurtubi, 1988). This verse has been made the basis of attack upon Islam. However, according to some Muslim scholars the *sword verse* is “*And fight against the disbelievers collectively as they fight against you collectively...*” (At-Taubah, 9:36) (Zamakhsahari, 1987), whereas some other scholars say that both or other verses are sword verses (Rashid Rida, undated).

### **The Historical Concept of Verses Commanding *Qital***

Every verse that includes *qital* (war) has a

historical context and has a revealed cause (*sabab al-nuzûl*) and this is primarily related to its first event and manifests a character that belongs to this event. For a good understanding of these verses one must refer to the historical background or *Sabab al-Nuzul* (Revealed Causes) of these verses. These two verses belong to At-Taubah which was revealed in Madina, especially revealed in the latter period in Madina. The contents of the surah are related to events arising from the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. The ancient Jahiliyah of Arabia resorted to desperate acts of belligerency. On the occasion of the Battle of Hunayn other tribes loyal to jahiliyah mustered their military forces together in a bid to prevent the spread of Islam’s reformative revolution which, after the capture of Mecca, had almost reached its zenith (Razi, undated). Therefore, the time of these two verses is in a context of extreme hostility increased against Islam.

In reality the first permission given about *qital* is in the Quranic verses, Al-Quran 22:39- 40, as mentioned above (Al-Tabari, 1999). When Muslims were persecuted by all and threatened by the Quraysh of Mecca who were declared war against them, God gave permission to fight in these words: “*Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory. [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right-only because they say: “Our Lord is Allah”*” (Al-Quran, 22:39- 40). This is considered the first revelation allowing the Muslims to engage in fighting. This was the first passage of the Qur’an which allowed Muhammad and his companions to defend themselves against their enemies by force and was revealed a little before the emigration to Madina.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had not been given permission to fight (*qital*) or allowed to shed blood before this verse. He (pbuh) had simply been ordered to call men to God and to endure insult and forgive the ignorant (A. Guillaume, 1955). Until that time Prophet Muhammad

(pbuh) had exhorted his Muslims to suffer the injuries given to them with patience which is also commanded in 70 different places of the Qur'an. Commentators say that Allah related the cause of this permission to be exposed to persecution because until this verse companions of Muhammad (pbuh) had been coming to Him (pbuh) wounded. He (pbuh) had always advised them to be patient and He (pbuh) said, "I haven't been ordered to make war" (Al-Wahidi, 1988; Al-Khazin, undated; Al-Baghawi, 1993; Ash-Shawkani, 1964). This, was the first verse which allowed Muslims to make war after some 70 verses had been revealed (sent down) that rejected going war (Zamakhshari, 1987; Baydâwî, 1991; Abu Hayyan, 2001; al-Alusi 1987).

The translator of Ibn Ishaq A. Guillaume, explains this period by these words: The Apostle Muhammad (pbuh) had not been given permission to fight or allowed to shed blood before the second 'Aqaba. He had simply been ordered to call men to God and to endure insult and forgive the ignorant. The Quraysh had persecuted his followers, seducing some from their religion, and exiling others from their country. When Quraysh became insolent towards God and rejected His gracious purpose, accused His prophet of lying, and ill treated and exiled those who served Him and proclaimed His unity, believed in His prophet, and held fast to His religion, He gave permission to His apostle to fight and to protect himself against those who wronged them and treated them badly (Al-Quran, 22:39-40) (A. Guillaume, 1955). All of these prove that the religion of Islam is a religion of peace, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is a prophet of peace and Islam never orders war unless there is a compulsory and acceptable cause.

Thus, as Afzalur Rahman said clearly, this commandment to fight is for self-preservation and self defence. It should be noted that the Quran, in treating the theme of war, as with many other themes, regularly gives the reasons and justifications for any action it demands.

The Quran says "Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged." Permission had been given to them for Muslims were under oppression and cruelty. We understand from this that for Muslims to participate in war there must be valid justifications, and strict conditions must be fulfilled. So because of events like these sometimes war may become necessary for Muslims to stop evil attacks against them. Under these circumstances, fighting becomes obligatory on all Muslims in order to protect not only their ideology and beliefs but their homes, lives, property and everything else. Thus, whenever a Muslim state is attacked by any other state or states, it becomes the religious duty of every Muslim of that state to join in fighting (*qital*) against the invaders (Afzalur Rahman, 1988). Thus, in this scenario war is necessary. For example, we understand from Al-Quran, 2:217-218, fighting being necessary in defence of sacred things and faith. If Muslims are faced with people who are determined to make Muslims abandon what they have and enter into their religion they have no choice but to fight and will be held accountable for it if they do not.

Thus, we understand from the Quran war becomes an obligation for self-defence according to Al-Baqarah, 2:190; Al-Quran, 22:39-40, defending religious freedom (Al-Quran, 22:39-41), and defending those who are oppressed: men, women and children who cry for help (Al-Quran, 4:75). Similarly, it is the duty of Muslims to help oppressed Muslims who cry for help, except against people with whom they have a treaty (Al-Quran, 8:72).

If we look carefully at the revealed cause of the related verses of the Quran and read them according to the background of the Quran as a whole, we will see that *qital* is an attempt against transgressors who wronged Muslims and treated them badly.

"And if they break their oaths after their treaty and defame your religion, then fight (*fa qatilu*)

*the leaders of disbelief*” (Al-Quran, 9:12). In this verse that seems to order Muslims to fight the unbelievers unconditionally, the general condition that fighting is only allowed by way of defence could be said to be understood “*And when the sacred months have passed, then kill (faqtulu) the idolaters wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush*” (Al-Quran, 9:5) Those who were mentioned in this verse are the idolaters who act bad against Muslims.

### Conditions for Fulfilling Jihad

According to Muslim scholars the aim of the verse “*Fight (fa qatilu) in the way of Allah those who fight you (yuqatilukum) but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors*” (Al-Quran, 2:190). Zamakhshari says the aim of the verse is Quraysh’s idolaters who fought against Muslims not Quraysh’s idolaters who did not fight against Muslims. According to Rabi ibn Anas the verse is the first one being revealed in Madina about war (Zamakhshari, 1987 ). Qurtubi is in the same opinion. According to him, Al-Quran, 2:190 is the first verse that relates to making war. War was prohibited before Hicre (Al-Quran, 41:34; Al-Al-Quran, 73:10, Al-Quran, 88:22). Like this verse none of the verses revealed in Mecca allowed the instigation of war. When Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) moved to Madina, the verse from Al-Quran, 2:190 was revealed (Al-Qurtubi, 1988). According to Zamakhsari (1987), the Prophet (pbuh) was fighting those who fought him (Al-Quran, 2:190) alone until Al-Quran, 9:36 (Zamakhshari, 1987). But according to Qurtubi this kind of behaviour of the Prophet’s continued until Al-Quran, 9:5 but this verse was abrogated by Al-Quran, 9:36 and has contained orders in it to go to war against all idolaters (Al-Qurtubi, 1988). According to Ibn Al- Arabi, there is not any abrogation. According to him the first verse about war is Al-Quran, 22:39 and in it had been given permission for war. The second verse is 2:190, the permission turned to obligation but in it fighting with those who

fought Muslims. The third verse, that is 9:5, ordered in it to fight all of idolaters (Ibn Al-Arabi, 1988).

As Zarkasi and Suyuti, some Islamic scholars did not accept any abrogation on the verses which mentioned the relations with the *mushrik* (idolater), too. They defined this kind of Qur’anic verse in the traditional understanding of the Islamic theology namely *Munsaat*. It means that when the situation and the condition of necessity came about and whichever Quranic verses coincided with the events, they could be applied to its own meaning in the context of time. The systematic method of Quranic interpretation evaluates verses under different conditions. However, we use one of the propositions of the Quranic hermeneutical method. If the first categorical condition vanishes in any occasion, the second categorical Quranic verses could be active in their own meaning in the context of time. For instance; the Quran advised Muslims how to struggle against idolaters. In a weaker position, such verses advised Muslims to be patient against their cruelty but when their power increased, they were instructed to defend themselves or fight against their oppressors (Al-Zarkashi, 2006; Al-Suyuti, 1987). Therefore, regarding the wisdom the gradual coming of the verses *Fakhr al-Din Al-Razi and Ibn Kathir* said: The cause of this is related to being the first in Islam. During this time Muslims were weak and the conditions of the time required this kind of behaviour. But after getting strong, the Muslims increased, as in the verse Al-Quran, 9:5 ordered in it the fighting all of idolaters (Ar-Razi, undated; Ibn Kathir, 2002).

But *Ash-Shankiti* analyses the reality according to laws of the soul and says the wisdom of the gradual coming is this: When Allah wants a behaviour which is hard on souls, legalization of it is accorded gradually (*tadric*), otherwise the reality of the new law being imposed suddenly would be too hard on those obliged to follow it. *Jihad* is like this because *Jihad* is very hard on souls. For *Jihad* includes death and surrendering of property. For the reality about *Jihad* firstly

they have been told “*Permission is given to those...*” (Al-Quran, 22:39). Later, when the souls of obliged people were used to Jihad, they have ordered to them “*Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you,*” (Al-Quran, 2:190). This is passing from permission to a private proposal. Lastly, when obliged people were further used to the new condition, namely act according to war which ordered in Al-Quran, 2:190. God ordered to them to fight against their enemies completely.

“*And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the idolaters wherever you find them...*” (Al-Quran, 9:5)” and “*And fight against the disbelievers collectively as they fight against you collectively...*” (Al-Quran, 9:36). The reality of gradually is in all of the requirements of hard behaviours in the Quran. The prohibition of drinking alcohol and fasting is like this (Ash-Shankiti).

Muslim scholars giving these explanations show Al-Quran, 9:5, 36 are the latest verses about war (Al-Alusi, 1987; Al-Qurtubi, 1988). They are putting into effect the aims to kill Quraysh’s idolaters and their partners. But the verse is not simply an order for killing, but also to take slaves, prisoners and to look after them appropriately. According to the Islamic scholar The people of the Book and Zoroastrians are not attacked by Muslims until they have broken their pledge and have caused harm and have to pay protective tax (*Jizya or Jaziyah*) (Al-Tabari, 1992; Al-Alusi, 1987) according to Al-Quran, 9:29 verse but, women, children, old people, men who want to live in peace, monks, men who have made a pledge, and sick people are excluded from fighting in all conditions so long as they have not been in private actions against Muslims.

Islam protects the people of the Book as long as they pay the *jizya / Jaziyah* and keep peace. When Umar saw a Jew begging in the streets he called the responsible person from the Baytu Al-Mal and said to him that swearing to God he would not allow an old person who had been

useful in his youth, to perish in his later years and ordered him to find and make list of such people (Abu Yusuf). This is an extraordinary example of a historical anecdote.

Again when Ibn Taymiyah meets Kutlushâh, the commander of the Monguls, to negotiate regarding the slaves held, he strongly declared “*unless the last of the Muslim, Jewish and Christian slaves are released, the war goes on. Jews and Christians are under our protection. We don’t accept any single one of them to remain as a slave.*” (Emin, 1977). In response to this determined attitude, not daring risk a new war, Mongul commander Kutlushâh released all the prisoners.

This following statement of Abu Bakr reveals the sensitivity of Muslims towards other minorities. When Abu Bakr (r.a.) sent Usamah’s army to war he said to them: “*Oh army, stop and I will order you (to do) ten (things); learn them from me by heart. You shall not engage in treachery; you shall not act unfaithfully; you shall not engage in deception; you shall not indulge in mutilation; you shall kill neither a young child nor an old man nor a woman; you shall not fell palm trees or burn them; you shall not cut down (any) fruit-bearing tree; you shall not slaughter a sheep or a cow or a camel except for food. You will pass people who occupy themselves in monks’ cells; leave them alone, what they busy themselves in which are varieties of food; if you eat anything from (those dishes), mention the name of God over them*” (Al-Tabari, 1992). All of these are evidence of tolerance of Islam about Islam’s outlook towards non-Muslims.

So we understand from the interpretations of the classical interpreters that Surah Taubah 9: 5 and 36 abrogated all the 124 verses which encouraged positive attitudes such as forgiveness, refraining from bad, establishing good relations and working towards peace. Examples of the verses which aim at establishing good relation in this world can be Al-Quran, 4:90, 94; 8: 61. It goes without saying that this classical and radical interpretation implies that

ninety percent of the verses in the same theme were abrogated. Indeed, with due respect, this cannot be accepted. This is the failure of these great commentators in terms of not adopting a holistic and integrated approach despite their immense contribution to hermeneutics of the Qur'an. Whereas, if we take Ibn Al-Arabî's opinion on the subject, which in the writer's opinion is the most logical approach, one can see there is a gradualness that infers Islam does not want war. This opinion is the best opinion on the subject according to Quranic perspective and its holistic background as a whole, because the Qur'anic universal rule is "*there shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion*" (Al-Quran, 2:256).

So Al-Quran, 9:5 and 36 verses have its purpose on the Quraysh and the idolaters of the Arabian Peninsula. They were persecuting Muslims, exhibiting extreme behaviours against them, breaking their pledge and beginning to offer resistance, wanting new Muslim converts to be again like them, idolaters. All of these were showing that they were a great danger for the new religion. For these reasons we understand Al-Quran, 9:5 and 36 verse purposes is on the Quraysh and the idolaters of the Arabia Peninsula.

If we think in this way, then any unabrogated verses offer an explanation and give meaning in context. This is the best interpretation as it fits the religion which is by nature peace and salvation. Moreover, Ibn Al-Arabi says the aim of the *sword verse* (At-Taubah, 9:5) is the idolaters who fought with Muslims (Ibn Al-Arabi, undated; Zuhayli, 1989).

Jassas, in the same parallel says "*Wa anna dhalike innama kane khassen fi qavmin minhum kanu ahla ghadrin ve khiyanatin*". This verse was sent for a particular event (or some people) rather than referring to the general, aiming for the idolaters who had been misleading Muslims (Jassas, 1993; Zuhayli, 1989) because they were instigating this behaviour and oppressing Muslims. They wanted Muslims to convert,

be like them, idolaters (Razi). This view is the most appropriate in the context of the Quran holistic background as a whole. Indeed, in the Qur'an for the other idolaters it is revealed as thus: "*Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes-from being righteous toward them and acting justly towards them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly*" (Al-Quran, 60:8).

This shows us that those who have good relations with Muslims do not wage war and any action against these good relations has been prohibited in the Qur'an. For this reason, *Abu Hanifa's* view that the idolaters in the Arabian Peninsula must be Muslim or they will be killed, no *Jizya* from them shall be taken there is no other alternative for them, must be a rigid one (*ijtihad*) (Al-Alusi 1987; Ibn Qayyim, 1961).

In this issue the best analysis belongs to *Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya*. He says in his book: *Ahkam Ahl Al-Dhimma, Jizya (protective tax)* has been taken from all of disbelievers. No disbeliever shall be exempted from *Jizya*, it is not for the people of the books alone because, according to a hadith (Muslim, 1992; Al-Darimi, 1992), when the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) appointed anyone as leader of an army or detachment he would especially exhort him. "*If they (the disbelievers) refuse to accept Islam, demand from them the Jizya. If they agree to pay, accept it from them and hold off your hands*".

Therefore, taking of *Jizya* from the people of the Book is according to the Qur'an but taking of it from disbelievers generally is according to the Sunna. Just as the Apostle of God (pbuh) took *Jizya* from Zoroastrians. There is no difference between Zoroastrians and idolaters. If you are asked: why the Apostle of God (pbuh) did not take *Jizya* from them although a lot of wars were made with idolaters, it can be said thus: Well, of course he did not take *Jizya* from them.

The verse of *Jizya* was revealed in the year of Tabuk war, namely at the ninth year of Hicrah

after the Arabian Peninsula's idolaters had converted to Islam. After the revelation of the verse the Apostle of God (pbuh), *Jizya* was taken from Zoroastrians and Christians. At the time no idolaters were in the peninsula. The Apostle of God (pbuh), after revealing the verse, took *Jizya* from Zoroastrians and Christians who were the settlers of the peninsula. After the arrival of The Apostle of God (pbuh) in Madina, he did not take *Jizya* from Madina's and Haybar's Jews, too. This was because, the Apostle of God (pbuh) had made an agreement of peace with them before the *Jizya* verse (Ibn Qayyim, 1961). This shows the writer that the rights of idolaters to live were granted if they gave *jizya*. The verses within the context of the killing of idolaters were revealed before the verses of *jizya* and addressed mainly those idolaters who are antagonistic to Islam.

In spite of all these premises, in the writer's opinion the interpretations made by some classical commentators who say that idolaters have not been given the right to live is a psychological consequence of living under conditions of war. But according to modernist authors, this is due to the situation prevalent during the first centuries of Islam, as the Islamic state was then surrounded by bitter enemies. The believers were at war (Asad, 1980; Darwaza, 1998; Ates, 1991). Since the second half of the nineteenth century, modernist authors have asserted that the relationship between the Islamic and the other states and tribes had essentially a peaceful character. They argue that this principle is firmly rooted in the Quran and cite the following verses (Peters, 2005) "*Allah*" "*If they withdraw from you, and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then God assign not any way to you against them*" (Al-Quran, 4 : 90) "...*Do not say to him who offers you a greeting (salam, which also means peace) 'Thou art not a believer, 'seeking the change goods of the present life*" (Al-Quran, 4 : 94) and "*And if they incline to peace, do thou incline to it; and put thy trust in God*"(Al-Quran, 8:61)

For example *Muhammad Asad* says: "*Every*

*verse of the Quran must be read and interpreted against background of the Quran as whole. The Taubah, 9 :5 verse, which speaks of a possible conversion to Islam on the part of "those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God" with whom the believers are at war; must, therefore, be considered in conjunction with several fundamental Qur'anic ordinances. One of them, "there shall be no coercion in matters of faith" (Al-Quran, 2:256), lays down categorically that any attempt at a forcible conversion of unbelievers is prohibited-which precludes the possibility of the Muslims' demanding or expecting that a defeated enemy should embrace Islam as the price of immunity. Secondly, the Qur'an ordains, "Fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you; but do not commit aggression, for, verily, God does not love aggressors" (Al-Quran, 2:190); Al-Quran, 4:91). Thus, war is permissible only in self-defence.*" Not in any other way. The only way of Muslims is their avoidance from every hostility (Asad, 1980).

A number of modernist interpreters have liked this point of view. This is incongruence with the writer's stand with the modernist scholars' ideas. Perhaps the classical interpretations of *Jihad* verses have an important function in historical time. Maybe the great expansion of Islam in the short time after its inception was largely due to the combative spirit of the new faith. *Jihad* verses of this kind played a large part in creating a conquering spirit in historical times; however this may not be the case in today's modern world. *Jihad* expresses the struggle of intelligence and persuasion. This is agreeable with *Said Nursi's* view: "*Jihad of the time being by love not by terror. The outside Jihad being by the glory of the certainty of Islam. Because outside enemies are civilized people we must do Jihad with evidence of Shari'a (Sari'a)*" (Nursi, 1990)

## Conclusion

As a result, it is understood that the word Islam is derived from the root word peace and due

to its roots, Islam aims to build peace in the world. In this issue the difference of some commentators about *Jihad* verse comments stem from their approach to the Qur'an. Some of them comment the Quranic verses as partial and exceptions of chronological fact of the verses. As it is seen in the other issues and subjects, when they comment on verses according to Quranic holistic background as a whole and chronological fact of the verses they see that the Qur'an does the right according to Islamic name and aims for peace for humanity in the world.

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