

# THE RHETORIC OF “TERROR” AND THE RHETORIC OF “JIHAD”: A PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION <sup>1</sup>

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Optimism about globalization dominated after the end of the cold war. However, with September 11, such optimism collapsed along with the twin towers in the heart of the United States of America. With this event, those who were already pessimistic because of the 1991 Gulf War and those who defended the thesis of “clash of civilizations” seemed more in touch with our world’s harsh realities. Are terror and jihad, then, inextricably intertwined (along with, say, Islam, Muslim, and Arab)?

In this article, I will demonstrate the misuse and abuse of the rhetoric of terror and *jihad*. By “rhetoric,” I mean the persuasive use of language for political means. I shall reveal, through the essay, what I mean by both “terror” and “jihad.”

I begin with a quotation from Derrida on September 11:

*“A philosopher would be one who seeks a new criteriology to distinguish between ‘comprehending’ and ‘justifying.’ For one can describe, comprehend, and explain a certain chain of events or series of associations that lead to ‘war’ or to ‘terrorism’ without justifying them in the least, while in fact condemning them and attempting to invent other associations. One can condemn unconditionally certain acts of terrorism (whether of the state or not) without having to ignore the situation that might have brought them about or even legitimated them”<sup>2</sup>*

I aim, in Derrida’s terms, to comprehend and condemn our current situation without justifying the horrors of terror and the so-called “war on terrorism.”

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<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides, A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida*, The Interview by Giovanna Borradori, in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, revised by Jacques Derrida, (The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 106-107.

## TERROR AS RHETORIC

A recent study found 109 different definitions of “terror”.<sup>3</sup> And yet, given this multiplicity, “terror” is often treated as if it were a Platonic idea, existing in the world of ideas, which guarantees its “real meaning.”<sup>4</sup> However, as Wittgenstein has argued, language is a collection of tools that is learned through use by the public in the public as part of a shared language-game.<sup>5</sup> Given that language is sociologically embedded, “terror” as used in such sentences as, “Terrorists are....” and “According to the FBI, terrorism is ....,” is often not innocent, the various meanings are sometimes related to their benefits and ideologies. As Foucault says “we are subjected to the production of truth through power.”<sup>6</sup> Dictating how language should be used is one of the ways through which power is exercised.

The word “terror” was first used during the French Revolution of 1789.<sup>7</sup> In contrast with most of our contemporary usages, it was used by the Jacobins with a positive connotation. Such violent acts were believed to be necessary in order to achieve peace. In our time, the word “terror” is often has a negative connotation. Because of its negative connotations, everybody is eager to label his opponent a terrorist. One commends a friend as “freedom fighter” while denigrating their enemies, for virtually identical acts, a “terrorist.” For example, the founder of Hezbollah, which some consider a terror group, Fadlallah says: “*We do not see ourselves as terrorists, because we do not believe in terrorism. To fight against the people who are invading our lands is not terrorism. We see ourselves as mujahids [one who struggles for the sake of Allah and Islam] who are fighting for a holy war.*”<sup>8</sup> Fadlallah legitimizes the actions of his organization as “fighting for freedom”.

The FBI, on the other hand, defines terrorism thus: “*Terrorism is the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.*”<sup>9</sup> The FBI’s emphasis on “civilian population” emphasizes actions against government. Yet,

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<sup>3</sup> Nezh Tavlak, *Teroru Tanımlamak*, (Strateji Journal, 2, 1995), p: 125.

<sup>4</sup> Although many use the meaning of terror” in that sense unconsciously, I think no one would argue that there is a corresponding “idea” to “terror” in a Platonic world.

<sup>5</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (Blackwell Publishing, 2001). This book reflects his later period’s philosophy and it is one of the most effective philosophy books of the 20th century’s philosophy.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power, Right, Truth*, in *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, ed: Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit, (Blackwell Publishers, 2002), p. 543

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (Columbia University Press, 1998), p: 15.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *ibid*, p: 31.

<sup>9</sup> [www.fbi.gov/publications/terror/terror2000\\_2001.html](http://www.fbi.gov/publications/terror/terror2000_2001.html) (28 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 0.85)

historically, the first usage of “terror” was to define a government’s actions. International agreements such as the Hague Conventions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the Geneva Convention of 1949 hold that states can commit criminal acts. Terrorism, then, becomes a moral problem that stems from the nature of its victims and its methods, not the identity of its agents.<sup>10</sup> While it is immoral to attack civilians, it is ok for armies equipped with strong guns and cannons to attack civilians who can fight back only with their weak, bare hands. But, on the other hand, militants or soldiers fighting against high-tech armies are often in a similar predicament--they are in a hopeless situation just like civilians against powerful armies (both are also powerless against the military might). Habermas stresses the moral problem of this asymmetry as follows: “*However, the asymmetry between the concentrated destructive power of the electronically controlled clusters of elegant and versatile missiles in the air and the archaic ferocity of the swarms of bearded warriors outfitted with Kalashnikovs on the ground remains a morally obscene sight.*”<sup>11</sup>

America declared the Afghan *mujahids* “holy warriors” and assisted them in their fight against the Soviet invasion.<sup>12</sup> But when the Taliban’s attacks turned against America, those “holy warriors” became “terrorists,” the first targets in the “war on terror.” Every violent act hinders dialogue between sides; and every death of an innocent person incites revenge among the people or the tribe of the victim. Derrida is right when he says that every “terrorist” claims to be responding in self defense to a prior “terrorism” on the part of their enemy, acts that went by other names, hiding under various moral rationalizations.<sup>13</sup> The poem quoted by Coady in his article “The Morality of Terrorism” questions the rhetoric of terrorism:

Throwing a bomb is bad,  
Dropping a bomb is good,  
Terror, no need to add  
Depends on who’s wearing the hood.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Tomis Kapitan, “Terrorism” *As A Method Of Terrorism*, ed: G. Meggle, in *The Ethics of Terrorism and Counter Terrorism*, (Ontos-Heusenstamm, 2000), p 23.

<sup>11</sup> Jurgen Habermas, *Fundamentalism and Terror: A Dialogue with Jurgen Habermas*, The Interview by Giovanna Borradori, in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, translated by Luis Guzman, revised by Jurgen Habermas, (The University of Chicago Press), 2003, p.28.

<sup>12</sup> Mehmet Ali Civelek, *Kuresellesme ve Teror, Saldirganlik Gercegi*, (Utopya Yayınevi), 2001, p. 288.

<sup>13</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Ibid*, p.103.

<sup>14</sup> C.A.J. Coady, *The Morality of Terrorism*, (Philosophy 60, 1985), p. 47

According to Coady, the difference in “linguistic habits” that rationalize one’s violent acts depends on whether “they” are with “us” or not.<sup>15</sup> American philosopher, Tomis Kapitan, comments on the damage caused by the use of the rhetoric of terror: *“The rhetoric serves to silence meaningful political debate. Those normally inclined to ask ‘why?’ are fearful of being labeled ‘soft’ on terrorism, while the more militant use the ‘terrorist’ label to deface the distinction between critical examination and appeasement. Those who succumb to the rhetoric contribute to the cycle of revenge and retaliation by endorsing violent actions of their own government, not only against those who commit terrorist actions, but also against those populations from whose ranks the terrorists emerge, for the simple reason that terrorists are frequently themselves civilians, living amid other civilians not so engaged. The consequence has been an increase in politically motivated violence against civilian targets – ‘terrorism’ under any other name- under the rubric of ‘retaliation’ or ‘counter-terrorism.’ The rhetoric of “terror” knows only the language of force. As long as they perceive themselves to be victims of intolerable injustices and view their oppressors as unwilling to arrive at an acceptable compromise, they are likely to answer violence with more violence.”*<sup>16</sup> Research conducted among suicide bombers reveals that many of these bombers have lost a family member or a loved one in the war.<sup>17</sup> This shows how world peace is endangered with every violent act which can easily ignite the fire of revenge.

Another danger of “terror” being used as rhetoric is that this can cause totally different and even hostile groups to form coalitions. For example, Al Qaeda has used “*jihad*” and other Islamic concepts as rhetoric against Shiite Muslims - like they used these terms as rhetoric against America- and massacred Shiites in Afghanistan. Combining Shiites and Al Qaeda under the label “Islamic terrorists” and the “war on terror”—with “us” against all of “them,” can cause new disasters, especially if Iran, who is thought to have weapons of mass destruction, shares them with Al Qaeda? It is uncommon for Muslim countries to share the political views, but a rare unifying subject is the Israel-Palestine conflict. Muslim countries think that the Palestinians are treated unjustly by the Israelis. To lump Al Qaeda in with the Palestinians under the umbrella “terrorists” may both inspire tougher Western reactions

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<sup>15</sup> C.A.J. Coady, *ibid*, S.63-64

<sup>16</sup> Tomis Kapitan, *Ibid*, p.28, See also Tomis Kapitan, *The Rhetoric of Terrorism and Its Consequences*, (Journal of Political and Military Sociology, Summer 2002)

<sup>17</sup> Deniz Ulke Arıbogán, *Tarihin Sonundan Barisin Sonuna*, (Timas Yayinlari, 2003)p:78

against Palestinians *and* increase the number of Al Qaeda supporters and sympathizers of who see violence as the only solution.

It is philosophically unacceptable to render an action undebatable by labeling it with the terms “war on terror” or “*jihad*”. People who thus justify violence with such rhetoric claims hold that their actions are above any kind of questioning. By labeling or describing the concepts according to their own benefit, they preclude serious discussion of whether their own actions are just or unjust. Each violent action must be considered separately from the other violent actions, and then examined analytically. To place all violent actions under the same heading is wrong, because each action has a different cause (some just, others are unjust) and different targets and each action is a consequence of different circumstances. People who affect public opinion by labeling their “enemies” “terrorist” must realize that they could be increasing the number of their enemies inadvertently.

### **JIHAD AS RHETORIC**

Many Islamic concepts--especially “*jihad*”—have, like “terrorist,” been used rhetorically. But for Muslims there is an important difference between the ontological status of Quranic concepts and humanly-fabricated concepts. While we can investigate the meaning of a word sociologically, we must also conduct a historical investigation and clarify political-public relations in order to understand how Islamic terminology was used. Islamic terms have an original text—the Quran—from which we can learn the real meaning of its concepts. A coherent hermeneutical approach to the Quranic text can decode these terms. According to Islam, the Quran is the text through which God established his relationship with people, and the main duty of the Prophet Muhammad was to transmit this message. The source of the Quran—God—is transcendent but with language for humans. Its transcendent dimension guarantees the “real meanings” of its religious terms. Yet not all human interpretations are guaranteed.

Even though personal benefit, misunderstanding, and the influence of traditions and politics have caused the Quran to be misunderstood (or to be suppressed by the other sources (*hadiths*, or *fatwas*)), the Quran exists as the source protecting the original meanings. Many modern Islamic scholars criticize *hadiths* because they surpass the authority of the Quran. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Mehmed Akif, Ahmad Amin, Tavfik Sidki,

Mahmud Abu-Rayye, Muhammad Ghazali, and Fazlurrahman are just a few of those critics.<sup>18</sup> This criticism was also common during the first and the second centuries after the death of the Prophet. The point in contention is that three or four centuries after the death of the Prophet, many of the *hadiths* were fabricated for political or other socio-political reasons. The only way to solve problems is to establish a coherent hermeneutical view, and eliminate the incorrect Quran interpretations which were produced for political reasons, along with fabricated *hadiths* and the *fatwas* (religious authorities' decisions on legal matters) and clarify Islam's real position towards subjects such as *jihad* and war and freedom of belief.

In order to prevent the politically-motivated rhetorical use of religious concepts, we should clarify the real meanings of these concepts. For example, in the 12th and 13th centuries, Hassan Sabbah and the Assassins used religious terminology for their own political benefit.<sup>19</sup> During the Gulf war in 1991, some Muslim leaders obtained *fatwas* to legitimate their participation in the American-led coalition against Saddam Hussein.<sup>20</sup> Osama bin Laden, on the other hand, declared fatwas justifying the fight with America after the Gulf War.<sup>21</sup> These events are just a few of the examples of how "*jihad*" and other Islamic concepts are used rhetorically. In the Middle East, declaring war without Islamic justification is difficult. This is because from the first days of Islam until our time, Islam has been the most important factor of the regional culture. Even the most secular of people have used religion in order to generate public support in the case of war. David Rapoport explains how Saddam Hussein, who was a secular leader fighting against the fundamentalists, used "*jihad*" when he wanted to mobilize the Iraqi people: " *He called for a jihad to expel the (Western) infidel and to liberate from evil and occupation the sacred sites in Saudi Arabia. A color photograph depicting a shirtless President Hussein kissing the shrine at Mecca and another of him in full military dress kneeling in prayer at of that most sacred Islamic shrine alternated in the back round as his speech was read. Since the crisis began in August 1990, his language has become saturated with religious references. The ironies here abound: a Christian founded Hussein's party (the Arab Baath Socialist Party), the party made great strides in transforming Iraq into a secular*

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<sup>18</sup> M. Hayri Kırbasoğlu, *İslam Düşüncesinde Hadis Metodolojisi*, (Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 1999), p. 14-15

<sup>19</sup> Abdülkerim Ozaydın, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Volume 16 (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1997), p. 348 -350

<sup>20</sup> John L. Esposito, *Unholy War*, (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 34

<sup>21</sup> Michael S. Swetham, Yonah Alexander, *Bir Terorist Aginin Profili: Osama Bin Laden*, (Güncel Yayıncılık, 2001) p. 129-130

*state, and finally Hussein had just concluded a very costly war against Islamic fundamentalism.”<sup>22</sup>*

## **TAKING THE QURAN SERIOUSLY ON JIHAD**

According to the Quran, the term “*jihad*” means “to strive”. “*Jihad*” has psychological, intellectual and sociological dimensions. And wars fought in the name of God have also been called “*jihad*” because they involved strife in the fight against the enemy.<sup>23</sup> A Quranic verse giving a non-militaristic meaning is quoted below:

**O believers, go out in the cause of God, whether light or heavy, and strive (*jihad*) in the service of God, wealth and soul. This is better for you if you understand.<sup>24</sup>**

### **9- Repentance, 41**

While the words “*qital*” and *harb*” emphasize war in the Quran, the word “*jihad*” has become a subject of primary importance in books written on this issue; as a result, all the wars in the name of “Islam” have been called “*jihads*”. But a person studying “war/*jihad* in Islam” must take into consideration all the verses in which these words are used in the Quran.

Most people agree that even though it was often different in practice, Muslims are permitted to fight only in wars which are in the name of God—they cannot fight for their own interests. However, the most important difference occurs when this question arises: “Is *jihad* a defensive war for Muslims or is it a war against non-Muslims (just because they are not Muslims)?” If we take the Quran as a whole, it is crystal clear that the war verses are directed only at people who have attacked Muslims. The two verses clarifying this subject are:

**So if you are oppressed, oppress those who oppress you to the same degree, and fear God and know that God is with those who are pious and follow the right path.**

### **2- The Cow, 194**

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<sup>22</sup> David C. Rapoport, *Some General Observations on Religion and Violence*, (Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence, No:3, 1991), p.122

<sup>23</sup> Bekir Karliga, *Cihad ve Teror*, (Karizma, Mart 2002), p. 118-119

<sup>24</sup> *The Quran*, I used two Quran translations: *A Contemporary Translation* by Ahmed Ali, (Princeton University Press, 1994), and *Translation and Commentary* by A. Yusuf Ali, (Islamic Propagation Center International)

**To those against whom war is made, permission is given, because they are wronged.**

## **22- The Pilgrimage, 39**

So, the Quran gives permission to fight only against the aggressor. While Hanafi, some Hanbali and Maliki jurists concur, Shafii and other Hanbali and Maliki jurists hold that being non-Muslim is sufficient reason enough for war.<sup>25</sup> Shafii jurists, for example, justify their belief with the 9th sura, verse 5:

**But when these months prohibited for fighting are over, slay the idolaters wheresoever you find them and take them captive or besiege them and lie in wait for them at every likely place.**

## **9-Repentance, 5**

But if one reads this verse to the end of the sura, one will see that it refers to the people who attacked Muslims first; since non-Muslims violated the treaty, defensive war is permitted. Let's look at the first verse of this sura:

**Immunity is granted those idolaters by God and his Apostle with whom you have a treaty.**

## **9- Repentance, 1**

From the continuation of the sura, it is understood that they were the first who attacked:

**12-But if they violate their oaths after their covenant, and attack you for your faith, fight the chiefs of unfaith. For their oaths are nothing to them: that thus they may be restrained.**

**13-Will you not fight people who violated their oaths, plotted to expel the Messenger, and attacked you first? Do you fear them? Nay, it is God Whom you should more justly fear, if you believe!**

## **9- Repentance 12, 13**

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<sup>25</sup> Ahmet Ozel, "Cihad" maddesi, Turkiye Diyanet Vakfi Islam Ansiklopedisi, Volume 7, (Turkiye Diyanet Vakfi Yayinlari, 1993), p. 528-529



Only by removing the verse from its context can the Shafii jurists hold that being a non-Muslim is a justification of war.<sup>26</sup> A coherent hermeneutic approach to the Quran requires taking the wholeness of the Quran into consideration; individual verses, then, have to be evaluated along with their prior and following verses (*siyaq-sibaq*). The Shafiis, on the other hand, claimed that the verses which permit fighting only when attacked first are abrogated, using some of the hadiths to support their view.<sup>27</sup>

The claims that one part of the Quran abrogates another part and that the hadiths surpass the authority of the Quran require critical evaluation. Ahmet Ozel argues that claiming that there is abrogation between the verses on *jihad* has no scientific point.<sup>28</sup> I think the claim that one part of the Quran abrogates another turns Islamic theology into a game in the hands of the jurists. Since we don't have a list of abrogated and nonabrogated verses, those who put forward this claim leave the decision to the jurists, leaving religion at their mercy. Muhammad Asad contends that the abrogation claim has no Quranic basis; moreover, there is not a single reliable *hadith* which supports the idea.<sup>29</sup> We must remember here that the allegation which tells us to punish a woman who has committed adultery by stoning her is derived from abrogation claims, although the sentence contradicts the Quran completely. We can properly understand every subject only by preserving the wholeness of the Quran which requires us to oppose abrogation claims. In order for some verses of the Quran to abrogate the others, there must be a discrepancy between its verses. This allegation is in violation of the verses claiming that there is no discrepancy in the Quran:

**Do they not consider the Quran? Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.**

#### **4- The Woman, 82**

As I mentioned before, there are many fabricated *hadiths* even in the most "trustworthy" *hadith* books. This issue is especially important for our debate here. The authority of the jurists, who claim that the verses which oppose their ideas are abrogated, and who choose only the *hadiths* supporting their ideas from among such politically fabricated *hadiths*, has surpassed the authority of the Quran. We must understand the interpretations of the jurists by

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<sup>26</sup>Hasan Elik, *Dini Ozunden Okumak*, (Marmara Universitesi Ilahiyat Fakultesi Vakfi Yayinlari,2004), p.165-182

<sup>27</sup> Ahmet Ozel, *ibid*, p. 529; For these *hadiths* you can look into; Bukhari-*Iman*-18 and Abu Dawud-*Jihad*-104.

<sup>28</sup> Ahmet Ozel, *ibid*, p. 529

<sup>29</sup> Muhammad Asad, *Kuran Mesaji*, Translated by Cahit Koytak, Ahmet Erturk, (Isaret Yayinlari,1996), p.30-31.

considering the political environment in which they lived. During the first centuries of Islam, politicians wanted to unite Muslim tribes which were fighting each other by making them fight outside enemies. Also, they wanted to unite people for new conquests. The formation of the militaristic rhetoric of *jihad*, then, is mainly the result of developing political issues. This rhetoric was used not only against non-Muslims, but also by Muslims who declared each other Muslim who they claimed were infidels. The abrogation claims and the fabricated *hadiths* have played a very important role in the loss of *jihad*'s Quranic meaning of a defensive war; by justifying war against all non-Muslims, they defend perpetual war.

Fabricated *hadiths*, *fatwas* and abrogation claims also generate problems for freedom of belief: some claim that Muslims who convert to another religion or who refuse to pray should be killed, and that people who do not fast should be beaten. To the contrary, two verses about freedom of belief are as follows:

**There is no compulsion in matter of faith.**

**2- The Cow, 256**

**Remind them; you are surely a reminder.**

**You are not a warden over them.**

**88- The Overpowering, 21-22**

If, according to Islam, being an unbeliever is not a cause for war and there is no compulsion in Islam, then there should and can be better communication between cultures. The defense of fighting with infidels, on the other hand, would mean perpetual war, making significant communication impossible. What about the effects of freedom of belief? If a Muslim is constantly scrutinizing fellow Muslims for sincerity of belief (and killing those one thinks insincere) and constantly calling non-Muslims unto the path of God (*dawah* is a religious duty),<sup>30</sup> significant communication will be impossible. This understanding of *jihad* as compulsion of belief will lead instead to a “communicative pathology” with one side speaking and the other simply forced to listen and heed. A world with such pathological communication will be full of violence.

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<sup>30</sup> : Ismail Al-Faruqi, *The Nature of Islamic Da'wah*, in *Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wah*,(The Islamic Foundation,1982),p: 33-38.

## THE QURAN AND THE ETHICS OF WAR

There are many debates about whether or not the Quranic approach to war is ethically acceptable. There are four possible ways to approach the “other.” The one who asserts that the Quranic approach is not acceptable should show which of the alternatives is. I think that the Quran’s attitude—not the attitude of all Muslims throughout history—towards war is ethically acceptable.

1) To fight without a rational justification: This, as we’ve shown, stands in opposition to the Quran. The “Thugs” provide a good example of this attitude. They killed trespassers as offerings to goddess Kali.<sup>31</sup> It is thought that the Thugs murdered about one million people in their 1200 years of existence.<sup>32</sup>

2) To fight with rational justification: Most wars have some rational justification, including economic reasons. Accordingly, preserving and gaining power is usually the target; considerations of justice and injustice are set aside. Although this approach has been applied throughout history, this attitude has not been approved from a philosophical perspective. What makes Machiavelli famous is his open defense of this kind of approach<sup>33</sup> and after him there had been many philosophical approaches which supported this view. The verses of the Quran which give permission to fight only in the cases of an attack (such as 22-The Pilgrimage, 39) are against this approach. But like the examples we have seen already, especially those of the politicians, and the jurists and *muftis* who are under their influence by presenting the rational causes as reasonable causes have surpassed the authority of the Quran with false interpretations, abrogation claims and fabricated *hadiths*.

3) Pacifism in every circumstance: Although the Quran opposes pacifism, forgiveness is preferable to punishment according to the Quran. We can understand that from the verses below:

**Good and evil are not alike. Repel evil with what is good. Then you will find your erstwhile enemy like a close, affectionate friend.**

**41- Adoration, 34**

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<sup>31</sup> Walter Reich, *Origins of Terrorism*, (Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1990), p. 121

<sup>32</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 89

<sup>33</sup> Niccollo Machiavelli, *Discourses*, Translated by Leslie J. Walker, (Penguin Books, 1955) p. 135

**But he who bears with patience and forgives, surely complies with divine resolve.**

#### **42- Consultation, 43**

According to the Quran forgiveness is superior, but the Quran does not approve of pacifism in every condition. A small group's or an individual's pacifism (such as Gandhi's) should be considered from a different perspective than pacifism in the face of an effort to destroy a community. Muslims, according to the Quran, are required to fight when their religion or societies are attacked or when there is an aim to destroy them. Allowing, in such circumstances, the children, women and elderly to be murdered is morally unacceptable.

4) To fight for reasonable causes: The verses of the Quran give permission to fight under conditions of just cause and this just cause is being attacked. People who approve of fighting against non-Muslim have destroyed the idea of "just cause," believing themselves free to declare war on whomever they wish. We witness many events in history in which Muslims have declared even other Muslims unbelievers and started "*jihad*" between Muslims.

The Quran's linking of the declaration of war with the reasonable cause of being attacked is the most ethical of the options listed above. Even in international law, self-defense is accepted as an "inherent right." According to the United Nations' 51st article people who face aggression have a right to self-defense.<sup>34</sup>

It should be clearly understood from the Quran whether killing in a war is permitted or not. Because Islam prohibits murder; if war is not presented as an exceptional situation wherein killing is permitted, then it can be concluded that Islam is supporting a total pacifism.

According to Quran, there are other important matters regarding war, which I would like to emphasize. For example, only the Prophet Muhammad is the only person sanctioned by the Quran in his time and after his death, there is no one whose decisions are guaranteed. No other person can claim that their decision to declare war is beyond debatable. Throughout history, many religious authorities from many different religions have claimed to know better than the rest of the public. For example, the Church claimed that its decisions were guided by the Holy Spirit giving it insight into God's will that common people lacked. Although

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<sup>34</sup> Huseyin Pazarci, *Uluslararası Hukuk*, (Turhan Kitabevi, 2005), p. 512-513

opposed by the Quran, there have been similar assertions in Islam, too. Many Muslims believe that some people are saints (*awliya*) and that as such every decision by a saint is incontestable; they hold that these people have special protections from and connections to which give them special knowledge which ordinary people lack. In addition, if a saint is also *Mahdi*, then devotion to their religious authority increases considerably. This belief can and has caused some saints' declarations of war to be accepted without hesitation, bypassing discussions about whether those wars were just or unjust.

It is widely believed in both Sunni and Shiite sects that at the end of the world the *Mahdi* will fight against the unbelievers and defeat them. Shiites believe that the Mahdi has been hiding more than 1100 years. This *Mahdi* belief is so important to Shiites that the Ayatullah Khumayni's rebellion was empowered by the belief that Khumayni represented the *Mahdi* until his return. Leaders of a thousand different Sunni sects have declared themselves to the *Mahdi*. A person believed to be the *Mahdi* gains a huge political advantage among his followers. From a Weberian perspective, *Mahdis* form the most absolute type of charismatic authority. Hasan Sabbah, who is always mentioned in every debate on the roots of terrorism, has also used this belief.<sup>35</sup> There are, however, no verses in the Quran about the *Mahdi*. And the *hadiths* about *Mahdi* are fabricated, created to achieve political goals.<sup>36</sup> If we recall that there were whispers circulating that Osama Bin Laden was the *Mahdi*,<sup>37</sup> we can understand the importance of the situation. As a result the Quran does not approve of any believer's epistemological superiority after the Prophet Muhammad. Since people special epistemological properties, an unjust declaration of war cannot be justified.

In addition, aside from the commencement conditions of a war, the manner in which that war is conducted (*jus in bello*), is also important to the ethics of war. A war can be an unjust war from the beginning and can also be conducted justly; and a war can start with just causes and be conducted unjustly. The verse of the Quran below is important for this subject:

**Fight those in the way of God who fight you, but do not be aggressive: God does not like aggressors.**

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<sup>35</sup> David C. Rapoport, *Fear and Trembling: Terrorism In Three Religous Traditions*, (The American Political Science Rewiew, Volume 78, 1984), p.665-668; Ali Coskun, *Mehdilik Fenomeni*, (Iz Yayincilik, 2004), p.343-345

<sup>36</sup> M. Hayri Kirbasoglu, *Alternatif Hadis Metodolojisi*, (Kitabiyat, 2004), p.369-370

<sup>37</sup> Timothy R. Furnish, *Bin Laden: The Man Who Would Be Mahdi*, (The Middle East Quarterly, Spring 2002)

## 2- The Cow, 190

While the Quran gives permission to fight back against those who start a war, after the war, Muslims cannot fight however they like; for example, they cannot be aggressors. Every war creates new phenomena. The difference between the tools of old warfare and those of modern warfare makes the debates about conduct during war harder. The Quran, by giving the principles but not the details on how to conduct a war, allow for the flexibility to improve new methods of conduct for every age. As John Kelsay, who studied the topic of “Islam and War” as a study in comparative ethics, says: “*Islamic contribution to the rules governing the conduct of modern war is still very much in process.*”<sup>38</sup> As I will argue in the following pages, the Quran’s stress on making agreements with the “others” should be combined with the issue of the conduct of war.

Just as there are Quranic principles about the commencement and conducting of war, so, too, the Quran also tells Muslims to cease the war if both sides seek peace. The following verses are important on this issue:

**But if they are inclined to peace, make peace with them.**

### 8-Spoils of War, 61

**God does not forbid you from being kind and acting justly towards those who did not fight over faith with you, nor expelled you from your homes. God indeed loves those who are just.**

### 60-The Woman Tried, 8

John Rawls says “No state has a right to war in the pursuit of its rational, as opposed to its reasonable, interests”<sup>39</sup> and the majority who study the ethics of war are of the same idea. This is in line with Islam’s orders. However, we have to have a clear separation between Islam and Muslims. Even if Muslims are supposed to be followers of Islam, they have their rational interests, which many cases have surpassed their religious duties; in fact these interests were mainly the interests of the political elite. Jurists or *muftis* announced that the wars were necessary for religious reasons (*fatwa*). To have those *fatwas* was important, first because they legitimized the war in the eyes of the people who were going to fight. Secondly,

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<sup>38</sup> John Kelsay, *Islam and War*, (John Knox Press, 1999), p.76

<sup>39</sup> John Rawls, , *The Law of Peoples*, (Harvard University Pres,2002), p.91

in order to motivate the people, they appealed to the ontology and eschatology of Islam. According to Islam's ontology and eschatology, there is one God who created everything and has the power to do everything; this God has prepared an eternal life in the Hereafter (*ahirat*). Each person's position in the Hereafter will be determined by his/her actions in this world. Apart from this, martyrs who die in a just war in the name of God will be rewarded in the Hereafter with an everlasting life full of pleasures (*cannat*). As a result, Islam offers transcendent causes that are related to an ontology and eschatology which should trump the worldly rational causes based on worldly interests. According to this belief, the martyrs, by sacrificing their short worldly lives, have the possibility of an excellent afterlife. The people who are conducting the wars for their rational power calculations use this ontology and eschatology for motivating the masses. As a result, *jihad* has become a mechanism of persuasion; that is why I say that *jihad* is used as rhetoric.

## **MAKING AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE QURAN AND COMMUNICATIVE ACTION**

Kant, following Hobbes', states that, "*The state of peace among men living in close proximity is not the natural state (status naturalis); instead, the natural state is one of war, which does not just consist in open hostilities, but also in the constant and enduring threat of them. The state of peace must therefore be established.*"<sup>40</sup> But, without communication, establishing peace and overcoming the state of war is impossible. So it is of paramount importance to understand the view of Islam about communication with the "others," particularly with the enemy.

The Prophet Muhammad signed the Hodaybiyya Treaty with idolaters, and despite the dissatisfaction of those around him, applied this treaty.<sup>41</sup> When the idolaters failed to honor the treaty, Muslims also stopped obeying it. Yet the Muslims did not discard the agreement with all of the idolaters, continuing to act in accordance with the treaty towards any idolaters who continued to obey it.<sup>42</sup> We can witness this from the verse below:

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<sup>40</sup> Immanuel Kant, *To Perpetual Peace A Philosophical Sketch*, Translated by Ted Humphrey, in *Perpetual Peace And Other Essays*, (Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), p.111

<sup>41</sup> Muhammed Hamidullah, "*Hudeybiye Antlasmasi*" maddesi, *Turkiye Diyanet Vakfi Islam Ansiklopedisi*, Volume 18, (Turkiye Diyanet Vakfi Yayinlari, 1993) p. 297-299

<sup>42</sup> Elmalili M. Hamdi Yazir, *Hak Dini Kuran Dili*, Volume 4, (Zehraveyn), p.278-279.

**Except those idolaters with whom you have a treaty, who have not failed you in the least, nor helped anyone against you. Fulfill your obligations to them during the term of the treaty.**

#### **9-Repentance, 4**

The Quranic verses which tell Muslims to be loyal to their oaths are important when we think about these agreements. The verse below is an example:

**So do not make your oaths a means of deceiving one another.**

#### **16-The Bees, 94**

It is of such importance that Muslims obey their treaties, that they have to consider their prior agreements even before they assist other Muslims. The two verses on this subject are:

**Except those who take refuge with a people allied to you, or those who, weary of fighting you or their people, come over to you. If God had so willed He would surely have given them power over you, and they would have fought you. If they keep aloof and do not fight, and offer peace, God has left you no reason to fight them.**

#### **4-The Women, 90**

**In case they ask for your help in the name of faith, you are duty bound to help them, except against a people with whom you have a treaty; for God sees all that you do.**

#### **8-Spoils Of War, 72**

The Quran's stress on treaties is seldom recognized when thinking about the problems of our age. According to the Quran, an agreement was reached even with the enemies of the Prophet and Muslims obeyed the conditions of the treaty. Hence, Muslims can have a treaty with *any* enemy; the unfavorable personality of one's enemy is no reason for not making an agreement.

According to Islam, since the Prophet was under the special protection of God his justness against the enemy was approved by the revelation of the Quran. Apart from the Prophet, the idea that people other than the Prophet are epistemologically privileged is not justified by the Quran. Hence no one's charisma may supersede the Quran's pronouncements, which prefer peace over war, and no one's charisma may prevent the process of making agreements which



build and maintain a peace. Whether this person be Imam Shafii, a charismatic leader from history or Bin Laden, a (recently) living charismatic figure, should not change the situation.

Every disagreement is a new phenomenon; we should of course consider and evaluate similarities between current disagreements and events described in the Quran. But at the same time, we should keep in mind that these disagreements are not identical to those in the Quran. In case of necessity, the declaration of war is possible only with the application of the primary principles of the Quran. Yet, we should know that since they do not have revelation, an individual's defense of war cannot be considered as weighty as the pronouncements of the Prophet. Since the revelation to Muslims has ended, none of the declarations of *jihads* now can claim to be as just as the Prophet's declarations of *jihad*. And his declarations were only against the people who were trying to destroy his people (and were supported with revelation). Therefore, Muslims should always be wary of interpretations which claim that war is necessary. Such critical inquiry is required to avoid the subversion of religious goals for political and personal goals ends.

Muslims, who believe that there are universal truths, differ from Habermas' approach, which rejects transcendental truths. But Muslims know that the universal truths they accept are sometimes not universally accepted truths. Is it possible, in such circumstances, for Muslims to communicate with non-Muslims? The verses we quoted above show that such communication is not only possible with non-Muslimism, it is even possible (and desirable) with enemies. A treaty, after all, is a form of communication with the "other" through language, one that accept that the "other" may still be "other"; it also holds an agreement is possible despite the different ontological and epistemological beliefs of the "other"—in such circumstances, one can be loyal to the agreement. Habermas, who is famous for communicative action, argues that communicative action language should be used as a medium for reaching solutions, and actors should seek achieving agreement.<sup>43</sup> To reach agreement, is the goal to be achieved by the end of the communication process. Because of this, it is especially important that making agreements with "others" has been stressed in the Quran, in this way, the legitimacy of the process before the agreement is clear.

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<sup>43</sup> Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Translated by Thomas McCarthy, Volume 1 (Beacon Pres, 1985)

## **IS RELIGION THE SOURCE OR THE MOTIVATOR OF VIOLENCE**

David C. Rapoport says that while religions have a violence-reducing element, they also have a violence-producing dimension.<sup>44</sup> Yet it is unfair to think, as many claim, that most of the wars in history were fought because of religion. First, it is worth noting the many times religion has prevented wars; these are seldom mentioned in history books; prevented wars generally do not get written into history. Second, the 20th century, with religion on the decline, is the century in which the most people died because of wars. Third, and I think the most importantly, for the biggest part of human history, religions have been the most important determinant in human lives. That is why, whatever the real reasons for the wars might be, people have used religious rhetoric to mobilize the masses to fight. Without this rhetoric, fighting would not have been nearly as successful. As historians have proven in many cases, the real reason behind wars with religious rhetoric is to increase economic and political power. As Hans Morgenthau argued in his theory of political realism, people's rational, objective and unemotional power calculations are the typical sources of war.<sup>45</sup>

Kant makes an important distinction between the "moral politician" and the "political moralist". The "moral politician" is the one who interprets the principles of political prudence so that they cohere with morality. On the other hand, the "political moralist" is the one who forges a morality to suit the statesman's advantage.<sup>46</sup> The intention of the "political moralist" is to protect and increase power. Political moralists use the concepts of religion rhetorically as instruments of political realism. Hence, many cases in which the wars seem to be religious wars were, in fact, political wars which used religious concepts rhetorically to motivate the masses. Yet religions' higher claims should prevail over the lesser political realism which states that gaining worldly power trumps all moral values and which says that wars are often necessary to increase power. Hence, for the communication process to effectively make and keep the peace, it must involve the major religions, which can help prevent the unfettered political realism that is a major source of violence.

It is important to determine if Islam legitimately justifies or merely rhetorically motivates violent acts. Most people, without making this distinction, present a list of violence acts as if Islam justifies them whereas in fact Islam was just used as motivator. If Islam were to

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<sup>44</sup> David Rapoport, *ibid*, p.118

<sup>45</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).

<sup>46</sup> Immanuel Kant, *ibid*, p.128.

legitimate violence, then the Quran would need to require or at least permit it. The only resource for Muslims regarding performing prescribed activities and avoiding prohibitions, is the Quran. The reason for Muslims' praying, fasting and not eating pork is the Quran. But, except for defensive wars, the Quran does not permit war for political or economic gain. Without certain political and economic problems, many wars in the name of Islam would not have been fought. In those wars, Islam is not the legitimate source of war and violence, but is used rhetorically as a motivator.

Besides the theological, ethical, and philosophical arguments for building a case for communication between the civilizations, we should also try to solve the concrete issues at the core of the real problems. If, as Huntington claims, the main problems between civilizations are cultural and religious, different religions are the cause of the clash of civilizations.<sup>47</sup> But this claim misses the fundamental economic dimensions of the problems between the West and Muslim countries. Habermas, for his part, rejects Huntington's claim because he thinks that the cause of the communicative ailments brought about by globalization is not cultural, but economic.<sup>48</sup> Although Muslim countries have the richest petroleum and natural gas reserves in the world, they are among the poorest countries overall. Although 22% of the world population is Muslim, only 3.8% of the world's revenue is produced by Muslim countries.<sup>49</sup> Many Muslims feel that they are being economically exploited and that the Palestinians are being treated unjustly by Israel, causing hate towards the West. (I am not going to discuss whether or not Muslims are exploited, or whether or not Palestinians are treated unjustly. But without understanding these general sentiments, it will not be possible to form a communicative process to solve these problems.) Hatred both destroys the possibility of communication between civilizations and is used by the groups or states to mobilize violence.

As Habermas notes the main problem regarding recent violence is economic. From the perspective of belief and cultural heritage, Western and Islamic civilizations which derive from the Abrahamic tradition are closer to each other than to other civilizations in the world. If some Islamic groups were to perform violent acts because of religious and cultural

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<sup>47</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and The Remaking of World Order*, (Simon and Schuster, 1997)

<sup>48</sup> Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, (The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p.65

<sup>49</sup> Ahmet Sozen, *Kuresellesmenin Getirdikleri ve ABD'nin İkilemi*, (Karizma, Ocak-Mart, 2002), p.55.

differences, they would more likely attack Japan or the China, where the religions are radically different from Islam. Or if they were performing violence against certain countries just because they are Western or Christian, they would be just as violent to Sweden or to Brazil.

Again, according to Huntington, the underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism, but Islam.<sup>50</sup> People who share Huntington's belief can try to alter the Muslim world's culture by force, say by imposing their own culture, but such efforts would trigger new acts of violence. As Abdul Aziz Said and Meena Sharify Funk report, "*Huntington's model manifests widespread cultural-triumphalist assumptions which stipulate that the whole world needs to conform to only Western norms and values to ensure a secure orderly and stable world. If 'others' fail to comply, then problems and/or clashes are inevitable.*"<sup>51</sup> If instead Habermas is right, we should try to solve the underlying economic problems. If we mistakenly identification the problems, the cure will not be right either.

### **SUPREME EMERGENCY EXEMPTION**

In order to persuade the masses that the wars are legitimate and to motivate the masses against the enemy, leaders of countries and extremist groups use "terror" in former circumstances and "*jihad*" in the latter as rhetoric. While people in the West have economic power and military might, on the other side, disempowered people fight against these very countries with their only resource—guerilla warfare. Like those who use "terror" as rhetoric want their actions to be accepted without debate, those who use "*jihad*" as rhetoric reject any opposition as disobedience to Islam. Just as Western countries don't want their politics questioned, extremists don't want their interpretations of Islam debated either; both try to suppress any opposition with their respective rhetorics of "terror" and "*jihad*". After 9-11, the US sought to restore its pride by declaring war on Iraq and causes massive numbers of civilians to die there. Extremist take revenge on their technologically unchallengeable enemy by attacking civilian targets, killing thousands of people. The casualties on both sides are predominantly innocents, including women and children. Kant's dictum-- "*No nation at war with another shall permit such acts of war as shall make mutual trust impossible during some future time at peace*"<sup>52</sup> -- has been undermined continuously. Moreover, today's events may escalate into bigger and

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<sup>50</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *ibid*, p.258.

<sup>51</sup> Abdul Aziz Said, Meena Sharify-Funk, *Dynamics of Cultural Diversity and Tolerance in Islam*, in *Cultural Diversity and Islam*, ed. Abdul Aziz Said, Meena Sharify-Funk (University Press of America, 2003) p.19

<sup>52</sup> Immanuel Kant, *ibid*, p109

unavoidable incidents. In order to avoid this very dangerous predicament, we need fruitful communication between the civilizations.

People who kill civilians, either through the rhetoric of “jihad” or “war on terror”, use various arguments to justify their actions. These are usually the kinds of argument which Michael Walzer calls “back-to-the-wall arguments”: when conventional means of resistance are hopeless or worn out, anything goes (anything that is necessary to win).<sup>53</sup> Walzer offers 1940s Great Britain as an example: because the Nazi threat could annihilate them, there was a “supreme emergency” which might require overriding the rights of innocent people and shattering the war convention.<sup>54</sup> Walzer says “*They bring us under the rule of necessity and necessity knows no rules*”<sup>55</sup> Rawls’ perspective on the issue is, “*This exemption allows us to set aside –in certain special circumstances- the strict status of civilians that normally prevents their being directly attacked in war.*”<sup>56</sup> And, according to Andrew Fiala, one of the philosophical principles used to justify the “war on terror” is the “supreme emergency exemption”.<sup>57</sup> In a “back-to-the-wall” situation, supporters of “terror” and the “the war on terror” use the “supreme emergency exemption” to justify their actions. Supporters of Kantian ethics,<sup>58</sup> on the other hand, do not accept the “exemption;” anyone who kills innocent people is wrong. This will lead us to philosophically ironic results. While the “supreme emergency” exemption is used by both sides to justify their violence, the Kantian approach is used by each side to blame the other. Since we are unlikely to reach a consensus about whether the acts of violence are ethically acceptable or not, we must first work to communicate between the civilizations, and then we must find concrete institutions to help us to build and to maintain peace.

Hannah Arendt argues that the best way for individuals to be protected from harm is to actively join in the political process.<sup>59</sup> Thus Muslims, where they live as minorities, should participate in the public/political sphere (the same is true for other minorities within the Muslim nations). More important still is the participation of majority-Muslim countries in

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<sup>53</sup> Michael Walzer, *Just And Unjust Wars*, (BasicBooks,1992), p.252

<sup>54</sup> Michael Walzer, *ibid*, p.259

<sup>55</sup> Michael Walzer, *ibid*, p.254

<sup>56</sup> John Rawls, *ibid*, p.98

<sup>57</sup> Andrew Fiala, *Terrorism and the Philosophy of History: Liberalism, Realism, and the Supreme Emergency Exemption*, (Essays in Philosophy, April 2002)

<sup>58</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique Of Practical Reason*, Translated by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978)

<sup>59</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins Of Totalitarianism*, (Harvest Books, 1973)

international organizations. Muslims can benefit more from the international organizations' protections, and these organizations can become legitimate in the eyes of the Muslim masses. The much-needed reform of the veto of the UN's permanent Security Council is important:<sup>60</sup> the UN should not be on the side of the strong but on the side of the right. After taking concrete steps to improve its legitimacy, the UN should prepare fair agreements, which would include the Muslim countries—as active and equal contractors—which avoid war and secure a lasting peace.

The communicative process can be formed on many levels without the assistance or the limitations of the UN. Those who are eager from each side should ignore those who are not and try to improve this process. Derrida draws attention to those on the Muslim side, who are trying to build communication instead of violence: *“We must help what is called Islam and what is called Arab to free themselves from such violent dogmatism. We must help those who are fighting heroically in this direction on the inside, whether we are talking about politics in the narrow sense of the term or else about an interpretation of the Quran.”*<sup>61</sup> The same approach, selecting those who are making a concerted effort at communication in the West, should be used by Muslims.

We can improve the communicative process by fighting against their economic causes, and by encouraging the language of dialogue instead of the language of violence. If we can free ourselves from the rhetoric which is used as a marketing instrument for violence, we can get rid of a big obstacle on the road towards dialogue and peace. The biggest philosophical success on this subject will be to show, even when “political moralists” are in power, which concrete institutions should be built to keep the world peace, and which sketch of the communicative process will achieve this.

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<sup>60</sup>Jurgen Habermas, *America And The World*, Interview with Eduardo Mendieta, [www.logosjournal.com/habermas\\_america.htm](http://www.logosjournal.com/habermas_america.htm)

<sup>61</sup> Jacques Derrida, *ibid*, p.113

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