Peace and Justice: Unveiling the Islamic Response to Terrorism in Pakistan

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Abstract

Pakistan has been fighting against terrorism for many years now and such a challenge have brought about horrible consequences to its citizens and the society. This paper will ventilate the Islamic opinion on terrorism in Pakistan paving the way to dispel the myth that Islam rolls the dice in favor of violence. Through an exploration of the foundational tenets of Islam such as peace (salam), justice (adl), and the sanctity of human life it becomes evident that these ideologies are mutually exclusive to terrorism. It explores how extremist organizations twist the sacred scriptures of Islam in their favor to promote aggression. This further increases the importance of viewing Islamic doctrine from multiple angles. Moreover, the paper analyzes the responses of Islamic society to terrorism through the lens of education, building interfaith space, and advocating for social justice as a measure to address society at all levels. The paper suggests fundamental change by exposing real Islamic message of mercy and justice. The framework is presented that may help to fight terrorism in Pakistan and contribute to the peace for its people.
Keywords: Islam, Peace, Terrorism, Pakistan, Mercy and Justice, Extremist Organizations

Introduction

Pakistan is a place where terrorism has been raging for a long time, backed by different forms of violence and instability, which have had a devastating effect on its society and economy (Khan, 2019). Countries are getting bombarded by bombings and targeted attacks while we also see sectarian violence and insurgencies. The people are terrified as they consider the incidents of terrorism, which leads to loss lives and fear among citizens (Rizvi, 2018). It is this incessant tragedy which is undermining the, intra-communal cohesion and, economic growth, and the national governance, which generates great concerns to the country's success and the state of at being. Different from the popular views to hold, Islam neither cultivates violence nor advocates violence as an intended measure. While this perspective is present, it is sometimes far from the reality. Islamic doctrine has been used more often than not to justify violence which favours an extremists' world view (Hashmi, 2016). The extremist group selectively quotes Quran and Hadiths verses purporting to justify their violence, without being considerate of the subliminal messaging of peace, benevolence, and justice (Saeed, 2020). The prevailing misconception was the

reason behind Islamophobia, and it was getting worse with time; thus, proving to be difficult for countering effectively the terrorism (Malik, 2019).

With the said purpose to understand the Islamic point of view on terrorism in Pakistan doubts that Islam permits violence must be dismissed. Through the analysis of central Islamic components i.e. peace (salam), justice (adl), and respect for lives; the paper seeks to establish these contradict terrorism (according to Hussain, 2018). The paper will be conducting an in-depth examination of the scriptures and doctrines of the Islamic faith to uncover the underlying ethical framework which provided the rationale for the Islamic discourse on terrorism (Rashid 2020). Last, a brief insight will be given into alternate ideologies based on extremist interpretations of Islam that ultimately corrupt the religion's original message and compel terrorists to such horrible deeds (Qureshi, 2017). This paper aims at exploring what Islam really is as a teaching of the religion of peace and justice and will further suggest methods for settling down terrorist activities into more peaceful society (Shah, 2021).

Core Islamic Principles Opposing Terrorism

Rooted in Islamic precepts lay the principles of peace, justice, and the worth of human life, which determine the Islamic ethics (Ahmed, 2010). The peace, in the perspective of Islam, has definitely broader scope that includes the violence elimination, but also harmony, reconciliation, and respect among all individuals and communities (Nasr, 2009). Justlke adl, justice becomes the substantive principle in which fairness, equality, and the rights of every citizen are entitled to regardless of their circumstances (Kelsay, 1993). Along with that, the religion of Islam particularly holds the highest regard in the world of humanity exemplified by its conception of human life as sacred and therefore condemning all forms of aggression or violence against adversaries that are not participating in wars (Khan, 2015). The Quran and prophet's hadith; the holy book of Islam has lots of ayahs (words) and ahadith (sayings); which depict the top priorities of Islam such as peace, justice and guarding the life of the innocent (Esposito, 2002). For instance, in Surah Al-Ma'idah verses explains "killing of a person is killing of the whole humanity. So this verse shows how the taking of life of an innocent person is not a small matter and to understand such a thing, the importance of the sanctity of human life should be emphasized. Just like this, Muhammad (SAW) also encouraged justice by narrating, "Help you brother, whether he is an oppressor or he is being oppressed."

When he was interrogated about how he can help that person, he replied by saying, "Do not make him like a person who is oppressing others" (Bukhari, 2449). The jihad term is widely misinterpreted, usually by some whom associate it with armed fighting and that is due in most cases to a large extent of ignorance. Yet, taken at its core, jihad is ceasing to be just war. It focuses on a broader meaning of effort or struggle in a right way (Cook, 2005). However, it is only possible to talk about armed jihad in some special cases such as the defense or the protection of the right of faith. The phrase, armed jihad, is not the generally accepted meaning of jihad in Islam (Esposito, 1998). Actually, on the contrary, jihad is comprised of personal improvement, self-engagement in society, and the preservation of moral rulers, like compassion, philanthropy, and social justice (Khaled). The Qur'an represents jihad in a multifaceted way, and it is seen as a lengthened concept covering conflicts with one's inordinate desires and engagements which lead to upholding good and justice in the world (Khan, 2009).

Misinterpretations of Islam by Extremist Groups

Extremist groups regularly excerpt violent actions texts in order to prove their justification, choosing verses out of context and exploiting them to their agendas (Sageman 2017). They not only select unwanted places of Quran and Hadith but also, avoid the holistic ethics in interpretation that was used during those eras (Roy, 2017). For instance, they may mistake the text containing Old Islamic era battles to launch attacks or oppose modernity which are motivated by extremist and fanatical religious tendencies respectively (Khosrokhavar, 2018). There is a tendency towards committing abuses because in this way religious leaders use these teachings legitimize the violence they commit and to encourage their followers to join them (Juergensmeyer 2017). Concentrating on a few verses of the Islamic scriptures, while lumping others together poses great risks, since they will not reflect the whole context ((Brown, 2017)). As a result, their understanding of Islam is likely to be distorted and provide basis for the extremist doctrines. By neglecting the comprehensive hermeneutics of the Quranic verses and hadith, the difference-makers infiltrate into the religious texts meaning and give the extremists a place to widen their narrow objectives, fostering community violence and intolerance (Safi, 2019). In this way, tilting the reading list towards particular authors and schools inevitably weakens the vast scholarly heritage of the Islamic world that extols the ideals of peace, justice,

and mercy (Abou El-Fadl, 2017). Considering doing so, the Islamic community would eventually appear to be different than it actually is as well as fueling stereotypes (Hallaq, 2019).

The theological causes of violence, however, are not the only ones accounting for the spread of the extremist narratives in Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan which has also lot to do with the grievances of those in the society, economic and political nowadays (Awan 2018). Some of those who are marginalized, disillusioned, or having low financial independence are prone to that propaganda that proffers a simplest of solutions to the complex problems (Khilji, 2016). This political instability, corruption and ineffective governance increases these grievances that provide the opportunity and engage the young generation to be supportive to the extremism ideologies (Rashid, 2019). However, outside actors, especially territorial disputes and political struggles in different parts of the world, also cause some members of the society to become radicals, thereby aggravating instability and violence (2020, Afridi).

Unveiling the Islamic Response to Terrorism

The Islamic scholars and institutions, at the same time, have the mandate to counter terrorism on both the national and international platforms and to stand against interpretations of Islam by the extremist groups (Auda, 2019). Prominent scholars use fatwas (religious rulings) and statements giving connotations that violence is not a part of the general belief and principles of Islam are emphasized (Haykel, 2016). It is the role of these scholars to provide theological counter-narratives to the extremist ideologies and as being the ones that preserved the deep tradition and ethical teachings of the Islam culture (Hamid, 2018). They actively undermine the rationalization employed by Extremist groups based on the Holy Scriptures by affirming the true essence of Islam as a peaceful and compassionate religion of God (Khaled, 2015). Education as a strong weapon against the ideology of extremists and the production of logic skills among the communities that may be accessible is offered (Sarwar, 2017). Campaigns towards fundamental religious knowledge and civic education give individuals cognitive capabilities to counter extremists' narrative (Haynes, 2019). The effectiveness of these programs to countering radicalization efforts lies in their confrontation of propaganda with tools to filter and think critically, thus equipping youth with skills they can use in the future (Safi, 2018). Furthermore, educational programs that stand for the homogeneity, plurality, and tolerance of diverse cultures are an instrument for creating societies resilient to extremist ideologies (Shafiq, 2020).

Dialogue among interfaith actually constitute one of the fundamental ways through which coexistence and harmony of different faith groups in the society are achieved (Esposito, 2017). Through engendering mutual respect, empathy, and concord, interfaith efforts unblock disputes and correct the prejudices that stoke communal differences (Abdul-Haq, 2016). Through dialogue and work, people of heterogeneous belief backgrounds can interact and join hands to accomplish common targets such as eliminating extremism and harassment (Schirrmacher, 2018). Similarly, the interfaith actions are conducted so as to develop humanity and sympathy and further grow a culture of peace, forgiveness and reconciliation. Through interfaith interaction, communities lay down the groundwork for understanding these differences and a more peaceful world in which all can be equal participants.

Addressing the Root Causes through Justice

The existence of a strong connection between justice and social injustice is easily observable. With the disenfranchised and marginalized being more susceptible to being radicalized, the extremist groups are born (Awan, 2017). Sentiments of rage generated by feelings of injustice, discrimination, and marginalization can potentially make the group vulnerable to the false promises of the extremist groups that purposely use those grievances to lure the masses and sell their ideologies to recruit more members (Juergensmeyer, 2020). In this particular circumstance, extremist narratives find an audience among individuals that feel resentment towards the society and identify themselves as a victim of discrimination, giving them a sense of belonging and purpose through intimidation and violence (Roy 2018). This way, it becomes clear that the most efficient approach to give up the factors which are creating the conditions for the rise of extremism (Cragin, 2011) is through provision of social justice. In deprivation motivated by poverty, inequality and the disenfranchisement which are resentful of those who are inefficiently enjoying a comfortable life; a good number people viewing the situation as a pathway to empowerment this contributes to radicalization and its ability to recruit many people into their beliefs (Kundnani, 20020). High degree of poverty, disfranchised and socially isolated people become easy target for the extreme groups to recruit, because for theses outcasts the extremist group will present them a promise of financial aid, status or sense of a belonging, which to them is a dream come true (Piazza, 2016). Consequently, the solution lies in dirigisme measures aimed

at resolving the conflicting social as well as economic disparities by way of fostering employments, education and enhancement of social security.

The principles of good governance and of lawfulness are some of the fundamental factors underlying peace, stability and fairness (Chesterman, 2017). In addition, there must be fair, transparent and accountable governance structures that comply with the rule of law to build trust between the state and its citizens. This should help in resolving their grievances and escalation of any conflicts. (Cohen, 2019). Governments, in governing, should facilitate that justice is provided to everyone, human rights are protected, and corruption is banned. Environment that is created then will be a functioning one and will encourage co-existence and socio-economic development (Bellamy, 2019). Beyond that, sound governance systems that emphasize the participation, equality and responsiveness to citizens' needs help to avoid the overlap of the segmented or alien societies that the extremists often tend to inhabit (Fukuyama, 2014).

Conclusion

Eventually, the promulgation of this message produces the very complete opposite of terrorism and violent extreme actions. Islam ensures that treating people with dignity and fairness is always a priority alongside the promotion of harmony and peace through reaffirmation of core Islamic principles of justice and human life sacredness. It is necessary to draw back the curtain and look beneath into what real Islamic position on terrorism is which is based on dialogue, education, and fairness as an instrument for exposing the actual causes of extremism. To develop the vision for the righter society in Pakistan and as well as the peace makers, the importance of the peacebuilding initiatives which centers the reconciliation, understanding, and cooperation among the different communities must be focused on. Support for education, economic progress, and good governance serves as basis of the society where the violent movement finds no place to grow, while the peaceful and benevolent nature of Islam and humanity can be seen at their best.

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