Pacifism and Jihad

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Abstract

In the present era, theorists try to explain the phenomenon of peace in the world through political theories, one of which is pacifism. Anti-war pacifism is considered the most common type of pacifism, because war is one of the main issues in international diplomacy. In this study, the initial aim is to provide a general overview of pacifism and its types, including virtue pacifism, deontological pacifism, consequential pacifism, and peacemaking, in international arena and then to introduce a different notion of peace-making based on Islamic diplomacy and to argue for a type of peace-making called perpetual peace. The findings of this study show that in Islam peace does not always mean the absence of violence but rather ever-lasting peace that flourishes in the absence of oppression, injustice, corruption, and tyranny.

Keywords: Deontological pacifism, Virtue pacifism, Consequential pacifism, Perpetual peace, Jihad.

Introduction

Culture, values, and ethical norms are currently basic issues in the international system. Promoting values and making peace, as the main bases of culture in society, have always been among human wishes and expectations. Although the word "culture" is overused, it is one of the words and concepts in social sciences and humanities whose definition is still a matter of disagreement. However, although over 160 definitions have been given for culture (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952, 6-7), its classical and well-known definition is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Taylor 1871, 1:1).

Therefore, if we regard values as the main principle of culture and as the criteria for distinguishing good from evil and right from wrong, then we can consider peace and peaceful coexistence among humans not only one of the most important values but also the result of all cultural values. In the resolution of the general conference of UNESCO, peace includes the process of development, justice, and perfect respect among nations resulting from mutual agreement, tolerance, and respect for others (UNESCO 1974). This meaning of peace is known as *positive peace*; while *negative peace*, which is a more limited concept, means lack of armed conflict (Dalai 1999, 202). Accordingly, the basis of peace is justice, but sometimes violence is necessary to achieve perpetual peace. Establishing peace is also the general and basic guideline in Islamic international relations; peace is the main principle, while war is for exceptional and limited cases. The primary function of all prophets and their scriptures was conflict resolution (Tabatabaʾi 1984, 155). Imam Ali, in his letter to his governor of Egypt, Malik al-Ashtar, wrote: "Nothing is more inviting of divine retribution, greater in (evil) consequence, and more effective

in decline of prosperity and cutting short of life than the shedding of blood without justification" (Nahj al-balagha, letter 53). The requirements for *jihad* are said to relate to defending religious freedom (Quran 22:39–41), self-defense (Quran 2:190), and defending those who are oppressed (Quran 4:75).

This study tries to compare the Islamic concept of jihad with the Western theory of pacifism. The focus will be on jihad, but pacifism will be described well enough to make a comparison meaningful. By exploring the theory of pacifism, this research attempts to defend the theory of *perpetual peace*, which is confirmed by Islam. This Islamic concept of peace has different levels, including peace with God, peace in family and society, and peace at the international level.

1. The Theory of Pacifism

In today's political discourse, pacifism is attributed to an extensive scope of theories which disapprove of war in order to prevent violence absolutely, even against animals and human properties. These theories can be categorized in four groups: according to some pacifists, the immorality of murder is the main doctrine of pacifism; according to a second group, every type of violence, whether personal or governmental, is unethical; in the view of a third group, personal violence is always wrong, but political violence is sometimes justifiable; and according to the last group, personal violence is sometimes justifiable, but war is always ethically inappropriate (Lakey 2008, 480-81).

Anti-war pacifism is the most common type of pacifism, because war is the most important ethical concern of pacifists. Pacifists oppose war of any kind, even in order to disarm, force out, or kill the enemy, and they present different religious or ethical reasons for their view.

Some believe that human nature basically cannot stand violence, and people's material life is valuable. Resorting to war is not only incompatible with human nature but also it leads to destruction, poverty, and hegemony of cruel states. War and violence are morally unjustifiable, because they lead to oppression against at least some people and groups.

Many pacifists state that military violence itself originates from racial, sexual, and financial violence, and it also leads to these very types of violence. Pacifist theorists propose using non-violence means and tactics like strike, demonstration, boycotting, and disobedience to achieve a legitimate objective. They believe that such activities do less physical and mental harm than military operations (Atack 2005, 125-41).

Pacifism is classified into absolute versus contingent, and maximal versus minimal types. Absolute or maximal pacifists believe that any kind of war and violence in any situation is wrong and that moderate violence is not possible, as super powers can hardly ever handle animosity and unethical and unreasonable destruction. Love for violence, hatred, wild resistance, and power are the basic principles of war. These factors are called "real evils" by Augustine. Absolutists avoid serving in the military, and some of them refuse to pay tax to show their opposition to the political and social system of war. Contingent or minimal pacifists consider some types of war justifiable and even essential in order to establish peace (Fiala 2007).

Based on its philosophical principles and various approaches, pacifism is categorized into consequentialist, deontological, and virtue pacifism.

1.1 Deontological Pacifism

Deontological pacifism is grounded in natural law or divine commandment and like deontological ethics, it is based on Kant's *categorical imperative*: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law" (Kant 2002, 421). Kant believes that a human must treat humans, whether himself or others, always as an end and never as a means. Therefore, war violates human dignity, because human beings have a right to life, and war results in killing innocent people. Kant adheres to revenge theory and argues that punishment should be consistent with the cruelty committed by the aggressor. He believes that killing innocent people is rooted in treating humans as means, which is against human dignity; it is in fact against universal law, since a world devoid of justice will ultimately be to the detriment of all people.

With his categorical imperative, Immanuel Kant is a deontological pacifist. In his concise and outstanding work *Perpetual Peace*, he attempts to propose a permanent model to unite the nations and make global peace, because he regards war as the greatest evil in society. Kant believes that the government is in charge of defending the rights of the citizens. Thus, he seems to support a sort of "hypothetical peace." One of the principles he proposes to institutionalize peace is that making a decision to resort to war depends on the consent of the citizens (Kant 2001, 78-99), and if war ever happened, unfair behavior and war crimes, such as mass murder and poisoning, must be avoided (Amin 2010, 72-3). Although some deontological pacifists regard killing civilians and even the military as unjustifiable (Fiala 2007), Kant and some other deontological pacifists accept war and violence with certain conditions, such as being defensive and with the consent of the citizens.

2.1 Virtue Pacifism

In virtue-ethics, an action which originates from the virtuous character of a moral person is ethical. In other words, an act is moral when it is in accordance with the behavior of a virtuous person in that situation. Other important principles of virtue ethics include intent and motivation, which are sometimes regarded as more important than the act itself. Some other significant principles of virtue ethics include emphasis on moral models and the recognition of suitable behavior by virtuous people. Moral models are wise people whose judgment is fair and right due to their ethical virtues and practical wisdom. Therefore, virtue pacifism is closely related to religion. In Christian pacifism, God's commandment, articulated by Jesus Christ, necessitates a commitment to pacifism. Christian pacifists believe that Christians should refuse to kill, regardless of the consequences in the real world. Faith in God gives the strength to endure suffering and also provides a final reward for those who remain committed to peaceful life. Pain and suffering will be redeemed in the larger structure of divine justice. According to the Bible, peace-makers will be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9).

Virtue pacifism is the commitment to being a peaceful person. Virtue pacifism also involves commitment to making our institutions peaceful. The virtue of virtue pacifism is peaceableness, which can be thought of as the mean between passivity and belligerence in social interactions (Farmer 2011, 38). There are two types of virtue pacifists: those who identify nonviolence as a virtue and those who see peacemaking as the purpose toward which all other activities are directed. Both views are concerned primarily with the character of the person who acts and only secondarily with the action itself. In the former approach, pacifism is a virtue, an attribute that helps people attain the goal of their life. "In the latter approach, peacemaking is not

a virtue, it is the telos—the positive goal toward which human life is directed. On this approach, much time is spent uncovering what virtues are necessary if persons are to be good peacemakers" (Hassell 2011, 805). Sometimes, distinction is made between different kinds of violence. A maximalist version of absolute pacifism would reject all coercion and violence, often including the killing or mistreatment of animals and harm done to the environment. Minimalist versions of absolute pacifism reject only those types of violence that destroy humans irrevocably, such as murder, war, and genocide (Hassell 2011, 804).

However, the fact is that the world without violence is impossible. War and peace are both religious and historical realities. Although using violence to oppose violence should not be taken as the first measure, peaceful measures are not always effective to stop violence and aggression; they even sometimes make the aggressor more insolent. Thus, war is ethically necessary in some conditions. War under certain circumstances to stop the aggressor is not only just and permissible but also necessary. If appropriate means are not used against international aggression, it leads to indifference to aggression and negligence in defending oppressed people (Orend 2005).

3.1 Consequentialist Pacifism

Consequentialist pacifism is usually grounded in rule utilitarianism and often prohibits war in a contingent way. A utilitarian pacifist believes that war and violence will not create the greatest happiness for the greatest number, and that war produces more harm than good. Empirical and historical data confirm this rule. A utilitarian argument claims that the justification for military action is not grounded in whether war violates certain ethical rules, but rather it is grounded in

its results. If war leads to more happiness than suffering, it is ethically justifiable. In ethical judgment about defensive or invasive war against country B, everything depends on whether its utility for country A is more than the suffering of those who are killed or harmed. In any case, this utility is only justifiable when it leads to the happiness of a greater number of people (Palmer 2009, 234). Consequentialist pacifism does not regard killing per se as unethical, and does not even make a distinction between combatants and noncombatants. If a humanitarian war defends human rights and alleviates the suffering and pain of more people, it is morally permissible. For example, pacifists such as Einstein and Russell considered World War II justifiable, because they held that the good produced by the war—the defeat of Nazism in Europe—justified it (Fiala 2007).

However, it should be noted that in the long run, war produces more harm. Resources that are spent on war, preparation for war, and beginning a war could produce more benefits if spent on peaceful activities, such as education, charity, sanitation, and health. Thus, rather than humanitarian intervention, there should be measures to protect international stability and to preserve important values like national sovereignty, which produce more benefits in the long run. Consequentialists seek value criterion and ethical obligation in the consequences of an act. The best form of ethical consequentialism is utilitarianism, which judges the ethical value of an act based on its providing greatest good for the greatest number of humans (Frankena 1997, 45). However, consequentialism is also faced with challenges: What is the criterion to judge the good and utility of an action for the majority of people? How and by using which criterion can we understand whether war or peace produces more good? Does good consist only in material welfare and worldly happiness, or does it also include spiritual and otherworldly realms? A ban on deliberately

shooting noncombatants in war is a useful rule as it reduces murder, damage, and destruction. Now, if in some circumstances observing this rule does not bring about more good, then is it ethically justifiable to kill the civilians?

2. Pacifism in Islam

The general rule and basic guideline in Islam is peace. The meaning of peace is linked with the root *s-l-m*, from which the word "Islam" is derived. In the Quran, God has called Himself "al-Salam," which means peace (Quran 23:59). Every Muslim should say the word "*salam*" to greet others, wishing them peace and safety. Daily prayers in Islam conclude with asking for peace for all. God is the sender of peace and tranquility (Quran 4:48), and Islam calls humans to peace (Quran 61:8). Justice, equality, forgiveness, and charity are among Islamic values related to peace. Islam emphasizes the sacredness of human life and considers killing one innocent human being like killing all humans (Quran 17:33; 6:151; 5:131). Indeed, the greatest right bestowed by God upon humans is the right to peaceful life. In Islamic law, there has been great emphasis on the importance of this right, such that not only killing and harming others is prohibited but also suicide and self-harm are not allowed (Quran 4:29). The Quran strongly disapproves of war and regards it as the origin of corruption and destruction (Quran 2:205), and calls for peace (Quran 2, 208). It also refuses aggression, invasion, and cruelty of any kind (Quran 2:109; 5:87; 7:55). Human longing for peace is in fact longing for God, and achieving peace and preserving it is grounded in worshipping God (Quran 3:64).

As discussed above, it is clear that in Islam, peace is considered a virtue, and peaceful acts are the responsibility of every Muslim

(deontological and virtue pacifism). However, pacifism in the sense of the absolute rejection of any violence is not admitted in the Quran. Sometimes, perpetual peace can be established after violence (Quran 2:193). As for the ethics of war, theorists also believe that under certain and exceptional circumstances, nonviolence strategies are ineffective in making peace and establishing social justice (Kelsay 1994, 34).

The practical conduct of the Prophet, including his peaceful coexistence with the Jews in Medina and his relations with the Christian state of Ethiopia, reveals peaceful national and international relations in Islam (Sobhani 1995, 1:530-33; 2:310-20). Based on the theory of pacifism, the basic principle in Islam is that Islamic states should have peaceful relations with other states. Muslims do not have a right to engage in war against other nations unless they are attacked by them (defensive war). The Prophet would accept peace proposals from the unbelievers, even if they were defeated in war. When some Christians converted to Islam, they suggested that they should force their children to accept Islam, but the Prophet rejected that idea (Motahhari 1995, 20-22). The Quran emphasizes that there is no compulsion in accepting religion (Quran 2:256). There are about one-hundred verses in the Quran calling Muslims to peace and considering war unjustifiable unless for self-defense and or defense of religion.

2.1 An Analysis of the Doctrine of Jihad as a Means to Achieve Perpetual Peace

The Arabic word "*jihad*" means effort, exertion, or battle; it is derived from *j-h-d* meaning striving, exerting oneself, or contending with a difficulty (Tahanawi 1998). The term jihad involves promoting right and impeding falsehood—the extreme effort of a person or a group to oppose cruelty, evil, and injustice. Jihad can be personal (with

oneself), verbal, or physical (Majlisi 1983, 65:370). According to the Islamic view, the highest and hardest jihad is with oneself and against one's desires (Majlisi 1983, 97:23). Jihad is one of the most important teachings in the Quran. It is obligatory for every Muslim to do jihad for God's sake, using all his power, including mental, physical, verbal, ethical, and financial. Thus, jihad is not necessarily a violent act; it is a comprehensive struggle for God's sake, which can be done in various ways. Using force (*qital*) is the last option and the most challenging stage of jihad.

The holy Quran considers *qital* as the final form of jihad. However, *qital* should not be considered as an aggressive act to gain material and mundane benefits or to impose religious beliefs. Although the Quran emphasizes that Muslims should fight against those who attack them, it also, in various verses, emphasizes that they should not begin a war or impose their religious beliefs (Quran 2:256). According to the Quran, if non-Muslims seek peace, Muslims should accept that request (Quran 8:61). The purpose of jihad is to achieve perpetual peace, and war for the sake of war is never accepted. In fact, war is for the sake of eliminating conflict in the world and establishing perpetual peace.

Jihad, in the sense of military effort, has been prescribed in a limited and hypothetical way in most of the related verses in the Quran. Thus, war is justifiable only in emergent circumstances to achieve perpetual peace. Such a war, known today as *just war*, is permissible in international diplomacy. By introducing moral criteria, the theory of just war aims to restrict violence in the world (Ramin 2012, 1:991-93). On the one hand, this theory necessitates using military force to defend international law, and, on the other hand, it

attempts to set some rules and criteria to restrict its application. Just war, which is proposed in Islamic diplomacy to achieve perpetual peace, is regulated by strict and restrictive rules. It can be definitely stated that under the current situation in the world, no war or armed combat with the conditions of jihad occurs, except wars that may be imposed on Muslim states. Islamic international law concerning war is far beyond the rules and criteria of just war. A characteristic of Islamic laws of war is their divine basis that guarantees their practical effect. In the political theory of Islam, the belief in God and sincerity in behavior guarantee the ethical performance of Muslims. Islamic teachings advise commanders and soldiers to observe moral, emotional, and human issues, and prohibit the combatants from unethical behavior during war. Just war as a Western concept comes from the Latin phrase *jus ad bellum* (justice of war) and is different from *jus in bello* (justice in war), which refers to conduct during war. Regarding the two principles of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, there are restrictive rules in Islamic policy, which will be discussed below.

2.2 The Conditions of Jihad in Islam (*Jus ad bellum*)

One of the most important principles of foreign policy in Islam is the priority of peaceful measures and dialogue over jihad. This declaration and ultimatum, as a basic step and effort to terminate aggression or to make up for a mistake, is essential (Quran 17:15; 29:18; 16:125). The conditions of jihad in Islam include a justifiable cause, legitimate authority, right intention, and proportionality. Moreover, jihad is permissible only when it is the only and last resort.

2.2.1 The Cause of War

There is disagreement among Muslim thinkers over the justifiable cause of jihad. Muslim jurists consider defending Islamic territories as a sufficient and justifiable cause for jihad. Jihad in general is

justifiable for the following reasons: (1) to repel aggression or its threat, (2) to punish those who have broken their pact, and (3) to establish justice and support oppressed people (Javandel 2010, 277). Jihad for the purpose of imposing religious beliefs is against the Quran. The freedom to choose between either Islam or paying tax (poll tax) and pacts between Prophet Muhammad and the followers of other religions show that the religious other is acknowledged in Islam. War against unbelievers only because of their beliefs was a controversial issue even at the time of the Prophet. Allamah a-Hilli permitted war against unbelievers upon their enmity and hostility toward Muslims. Mahmoud Shaltut did not recognize disagreement in religion as a justification to wage war, unless peaceful proselytization for Islam is banned in a place. Mohammad Abduh also stated that according to the Quran, fighting against unbelievers is restricted to those who have broken their treaty or attacked Muslims (Abedi and Legenhausen 1986, 10-13). Motahhari distinguished between harassment and lack of faith, and considered harassment or oppression a condition which should accompany lack of faith in order to justify jihad (Motahhari 1986, 110-11).

2.2.2 Legitimate Authority

Repelling an outside attack does not require any specific permission; all Muslim are obliged to participate in this type of defense. In the case of the expansionary jihad, the situation is different. In Shiite jurisprudence, this form of jihad requires either the presence of the rightful Imam or his deputy. However, some Shiite thinkers believe that in the absence of the Infallible Imam, expansionary jihad is not allowed at all (Tusi 1959, 2:8; Saduq 1965, 394). This requirement is to prevent the misuse of jihad by leaders who have this-worldly goals.

Only the Infallible Imam, who has an inerrant understanding of Islamic teachings, can determine when expansionary jihad is permissible.

2.2.3 Right Intention

Jihad in Islam is a sort of prayer. Combatants should fight for the sake of God. Jihad is not allowed with egotistical, political, and economical goals. That is why the Prophet called his companions who had participated in a military jihad to "the greater jihad," which he interpreted as the jihad with oneself. Emphasis on sincerity in jihad (Majlisi 1983, 97:48) and not waging war during the Sacred Months (Quran 2:217) and in holy places like the Holy Mosque and holy shrines (2:19) signifies this important issue.

2.2.4 Proportionality

The benefits of jihad or at least the harms which it prevents should be greater than the harms which are caused by war. Muslim thinkers agree that war and fighting are in themselves evil and corruption, and if war occurs, it should be only to save the world from a greater evil or corruption (Quran 2:191; 2:217). When making peace treaties, the principle of proportionality is emphasized more (Abedi and Legenhausen 1986, 723).

2.2.5 Last Resort

Only after enlightening and giving an ultimatum, jihad can be started. Thus, peace is the basic principle in Islam: "And if they incline toward peace, then you [too] incline toward it, and put your trust in Allah. Indeed, He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing" (Quran 8:61). Jihad starts with enlightening, encouraging good, and discouraging evil, and it continues with precautionary dissimulation. If these measures were not effective, there will finally come the time for using force, which is

the last resort and stage of jihad. Muslims are not allowed to fight before they explain their position and try to enlighten the other side, which should be done with sympathy and affection. God commands His apostle to speak in a soft manner so that others may take heed of the reminder (Quran 20:44). Jihad can only be waged if all other peaceful measures fail.

2.3 Moral Conduct in Jihad (*Jus in bello*)

This part addresses the moral aspect of conduct in jihad. Of course, this aspect is inseparable from its just cause (*jus ad bellum*). Illegitimate conduct in war negatively affects the legitimacy of its cause. Among the rules of justice in war are the following: sanctity of covenants, contracts, and treaties (*'ahd, 'aqd, mīthāq*); respect for the amnesty (*amān*) given to the enemy during the battle; equal validity of the amnesty given by any Muslim combatant; prohibition of the use of poison; prohibition of the initiation of the battle in any war; prohibition of attacking the elderly, women, children, and the disabled regardless of their faith; ban on night attacks; and, above all, the absolute ban on resorting to perfidy or treachery (*ghadr*). The hadiths clearly distinguish between treachery or perfidy (*ghadr*), which is absolutely forbidden, as it involves a unilateral breach of a contract or treaty, and ruse (*khud'a*), which is a tactical deceit in war (ʿAmili 2001, 6:102).

2.3.1 Discrimination

The principle of discrimination means that the combatants must discriminate between combatants and civilians, who should never be the target of an attack. Islam always seeks reduction in the harmful effects of war and proposes restrictive laws and regulations to eliminate war. In Quranic culture, attacking civilians is strongly prohibited (Quran 2:19; 2:193). Being good tempered to slaves and

not torturing or killing them, and also being affable to fellow humans have always been emphasized in Islam (Quran 76:8-9).

During jihad, the Prophet used to say: "Don't kill women, children, and the elders! Don't burn palm trees and farms!" He also advised not to kill priests, rabbis, messengers, and the hostages. He also said that whoever stays at home and closes the door is safe (Tusi 1986, 151).

Islamic teachings advise the commanders and combatants to observe ethics and empathy. It also demands the soldiers to avoid unethical behaviors, such as cursing, during hard times of war: "Do not [verbally] abuse those whom they invoke besides Allah, lest they should abuse Allah out of hostility, without any knowledge" (Quran 6:108). We also read in the Quran, "Do not kill a soul [whose life] Allah has made inviolable, except with due cause, and whoever is killed wrongfully, We have certainly given his heir an authority. But let him not commit any excess in killing [the murderer], for he has been assisted [by law]" (Quran 17:33). During the battle of Siffin, Iman ʿAli heard some of his men abusing the Syrians, so he said:

I dislike you starting to abuse them, but if you describe their deeds and recount their situations, that would be a better mode of speaking and a more convincing way of arguing. Instead of abusing them you should say, "O Allah! save our blood and their blood, produce reconciliation between us and them, and lead them out of their misguidance so that he who is ignorant of the truth may know it, and he who inclines towards rebellion and revolt may turn away from it." (Nahj al-balagha, sermon 205*).*

2.3.2 Proportionality
The means applied during jihad must be proportionate to the objectives of jihad. In planning Islamic military operations, it is not

permissible to use weapons of mass destruction. Muslims have been prohibited from poisoning the land of the enemy during jihad (Majlisi 1983, 19:177-78). The commanders should think of tactics to gain victory with the least amount of force, and they should avoid any unnecessary destruction, such as cutting and burning the trees and cutting off the enemy's access to water.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was comparing the Islamic concept of peace with its Western counterpart. That Islam and pacifism are incompatible is a common assumption in international diplomacy, but Islam is sociologically and theologically compatible with pacifism (Brown 2006, 5-18). Jihad means effort or struggle, which does not necessarily indicate military struggle. In fact, as reported in hadiths, the Prophet taught his companions that the "greater jihad" was the jihad against one's own self. Therefore, jihad means military struggle only in some cases, and even in those cases it is not incompatible with pacifism. The name "Islam" means peace or being at peace—a name that was given to this religion by God (Quran 5:3). So, jihad must be understood in the context of "Islam"; it is a struggle in the context of peace. This means that Islam aims to build peace in the world. However, the fact is that conflict is inevitable in order to achieve perpetual peace, and that is why just war is morally justifiable in international diplomacy. This type of war is constrained in Islam by strict criteria and rules, which limit it solely to defensive war under certain circumstances. This theory of jihad is indeed compatible with some versions of pacifism.

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