

SAFINAH TOUGH QUESTIONS TALK – “JIHAD JARGON”
7 March 2015, 2.00 – 4.00pm, FaithHub

Lecture Notes

Muhammad Haniff Hassan
Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies
www.haniff.sg / ismhaniff@ntu.edu.sg

NOTE

This lecture notes were largely put together by “cut-and-paste” from my previous works. Due to limited time available, I am not able to re-write or para-phrase the extracted materials, provide footnotes and avoid repetition. For that, I sincerely apologise. However, the original works from which this note is put together are:

- Muhammad Haniff Hassan and Mohamed Ali, *Questions and Answers on Jihad*, Singapore: Muis-Perdaus, 2007. See <https://counterideology2.wordpress.com/2012/11/20/my-booklet-questions-and-answers-on-jihad/>
- Muhammad Haniff Hassan, *Unlicensed to Kill: Countering Imam Samudra’s Justification of Bali Bombing*, Singapore: Peace Matters, 2007. See <https://counterideology2.wordpress.com/2009/10/21/my-book-unlicensed-to-kill-free-online-version-in-pdf-format/>
- Muhammad Haniff Hassan, “Islam Between Virtuous Existence and Violent Extremism”, *Prosiding Seminar Serantau Islam dan Kesejahteraan (Regional Conference on Islam and Peace Proceeding Book)*, Faculty of Islamic Theology Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University, Bandar Seri Begawan: Brunei Darussalam, Vol. II, 2011. See <https://counterideology2.wordpress.com/2012/11/22/my-article-islam-between-virtuous-existence-and-violent-extremism/>
- Muhammad Haniff Hassan, *The Father of Jihad: `Abd Allah `Azzam’s Jihad Ideas and Implications to National Security*, London: Imperial College Press, 2014.
- Muhammad Haniff Hassan (ed.), *Moderation in Islam in the Context of Muslim Community in Singapore*, Singapore: Pergas, 2004.

1. What are the goals of Jihad - purpose, aim, objectives?

The term jihad is derived from the Arabic root word jahada, which means 'to strive' or 'to struggle'.

In Islam, jihad essentially means to strive with our utmost energies and to the best of our abilities in carrying out God's commands, be it to perform righteous deeds or to refrain oneself from evil deeds with the overall objective of safeguarding the well-being of all creations. Jihad is part of the overarching Islamic teaching of peaceful submission to God and peaceful relations with all others.

Jihad can take many forms. It can take the form of verbal jihad, which means to offer advice to those who need it or jihad with strength and service, as in performing community service for the less fortunate.

Hence, armed jihad is just one of many forms of jihad in Islam and not the only one.

Just as the meanings of jihad are wide, its objectives are also multiple. Among them are:

a. Subjugation of Self-Desires

Muslims are asked to develop moral and spiritual strength, in order to overcome the challenges in life with confidence. Thus, they need to perform jihad to fight and control their self-desires, which may urge man towards evil deeds. This can be done by purifying oneself from negative traits and replacing them with virtuous traits through acts of worship like reading the Quran, performing zikr (remembrance of God), fasting, giving alms and cultivating beautiful manners in social interactions.

This form of jihad actually precedes the other forms of jihad including armed jihad, as it is difficult to perform virtuous deeds and sacrifice in the name of Allah if one is controlled by his desires and his heart is void of sincerity.

b. Uplifting Intellect

Muslims need to perform jihad to continuously upgrade their intellectual capacities and sharpen their minds to contribute towards the benefit of all. This should be done by being open to learning from one's own civilisation and from others, and the preparedness to receive, process and develop knowledge so that a Muslim becomes a source of blessing for others.

c. Advising those who perform evil deeds or follow their desires

Muslims should perform jihad to guide and engage this group of people with wisdom and beautiful preaching to bring them back to the correct path.

d. Advising those who cause destruction to lives, property and the world

Muslims need to perform jihad, by means of pursuing appropriate legal means to prevent this group from continuing their destructive path.

e. Self-defence

When a country in which Muslims reside is unjustly attacked or illegally occupied, it is obligatory upon them to defend it even if it means taking up arms.

In essence, the ultimate purpose of jihad is to establish all that are good and eliminate all that are evil. Violence is one of many means but non-violence is more preferred.

The emphasis on peace and harmony in Islam may be seen from the following:

a. By virtue of its name, Islam means peace and harmony. Violence is not in line with such a name.

b. Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) was appointed as a blessing for the entire universe.

In the Holy Quran, Allah Almighty says,

“We sent you not, but as a Mercy for all the Universe.” (The Holy Quran 21: 107)

Violence is not concordant with his mission of mercy (rahmat).

c. Allah Almighty commanded Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) to prioritise peace, as in the Holy Quran;

“And if the enemy inclines towards peace, do you (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah.” (The Holy Quran 8: 61)

d. Violence does not appeal to the nature of man.

During the Battle of Uhud, the disobedience of some of his followers resulted in a near tragedy. What is significant is firstly, Prophet Muhammad did not act harshly against those who were guilty, and secondly, Allah actually commended him for that in the Holy Quran,

“It is part of the Mercy of Allah that you do deal gently with them. Were you severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from you; so pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah’s) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of the moment)” (The Holy Quran 3: 159)

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) also reminded his followers similarly when he said:

“Convey the good news and do not make them run away, make it easy and do not make it difficult.” (Related by Muslim)

e. Muslims are taught to counter wickedness with good deeds.

Violence contradicts this teaching. Allah Almighty says:

“Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and you were hatred become as it were, your friend and intimate!” (The Holy Quran 41: 34)

f. Violence gives rise to a lot of difficulties, and will only inconvenience oneself.

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said:

“Indeed this religion is easy and it will defeat anyone who makes it difficult” (Related by Al-Bukhari)

g. Prophet Muhammad himself established Madinah through peaceful da’wah.

h. Islam is more easily spread in a peaceful environment.

The Hudaibiyah Accord serves as a powerful demonstration of this: record numbers of people came into Islam in the consequent 2 peaceful years, so much that it was almost the same as the total for the preceding 19 years of Prophet Muhammad’s mission.

i. History has shown that Islam has the potential to spread rapidly via peaceful methods as it did in the Malay Archipelago and in China.

Therefore, peaceful ways of spreading the faith should be preferred in place of force and violence.

Does armed jihad relevant then?

Armed jihad is an Islamic ruling that remains relevant. In fact, armed jihad is synonymous to the concept of nations protecting their sovereignty. However, even in self-defence, Islam promulgates a set of ethics and rulings which must be observed.

From Moderation in Islam in the Context of Singapore Muslim Community

ISSUE 5 ~ MISPERCEPTION OF JIHAD

We will not discuss all misperceptions of jihad, but will focus on two standpoints which may lead to extremist tendencies.

They are;

- a. Understanding that armed jihad is the primary means of jihad; and/or
- b. Preference for armed jihad as a solution to all situations.

Meaning of Jihad

Anyone who studies the writings on jihad by the past ulama will find that they understood jihad in two forms;

- a. In its general meaning
- b. In its specific meaning

The book, *Al-Mausu'ah Al-Fiqhiah* by the Ministry of Awqaf (Endowment) and Islamic Affairs of Kuwait, lists the following opinions of the ulama on the meaning of jihad;

- Ar-Raghib explains jihad as an all-out effort to obstruct the enemy either physically, verbally or with whatever one is capable of. There are 3 types of mujahadah (fighting in the name of Allah); either against an actual enemy, or against Satan or one's nafs (lower self). These three are the types of jihad referred to in the Holy Quran, 'And jihad (fight) in the cause of Allah with true jihad'.
- Ibn Taimiyah said that jihad may take the following forms:
 - resolving to do it (in the heart)
 - inviting to Islam and its commandments
 - speaking out against wrongdoing
 - explaining the truth and clarifying doubtful acts
 - expressing views or performing deeds that are beneficial to Muslims
 - fighting in battleHe says it is obligatory to jihad with whichever possible.
- Al-Bahuti gave this example of general jihad: "Among these is to taunt the disbelievers (with poetry) as Hassan previously did to the enemies of the Prophet s.a.w". As a specific term, he defined jihad as the act of Muslims waging war against disbelievers who oppose faith and with whom there are no peace accords, in order to glorify the kalimah (words) of Allah Almighty.

The general meaning of jihad was explained at length by Ibn Qayyim who wrote;

"Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) was at the pinnacle of observing jihad. He mastered all of its varieties. He performed jihad for the sake of Allah to the utmost; with his heart and his body, through da'wah and information, with the sword and the spear. As for his time, it was all dedicated to jihad, with his feelings, speech and actions. He is the highest of creations as per the words of Allah, and has the most honoured position by the side of Allah...

25: 52; this is a Meccan revelation. In it, Allah commands jihad against the unbelievers through debate, propagation and conveying the Holy Quran. The same manner of jihad is conducted on the munafiq (hypocrite)...

As for jihad against one's own self, it precedes jihad against enemies on the outside, and is the starting point. Indeed, as long as one does not do jihad on one's own self to make it do what is commanded, and to leave what Allah forbids and declares war upon, one will not be able to do jihad against the enemies outside ...

Between the two (one's self and the enemy) is the third enemy, namely Satan...

The salaf of the past differed in opinion on the meaning of jihad. Ibn Abbas said, 'It is an act which requires much effort, and for which one does not fear condemnation from others. Muqatil said 'Performing for Allah with the best of performance, worshipping with the best of worship'. Abdullah bin Al-Mubarak said 'Fighting one's own nafs.' "

From the descriptions of jihad given by Ar-Raghib, for an enemy in general, and Ibn Qayyim, for unbelievers and the munafiq, it may be understood that armed combat is only one of the several meanings of jihad. That is, armed combat is the specific meaning of jihad, but jihad also has a general meaning. Both the specific and general meanings of jihad can be found in the Holy Quran; in which the word jihad is used to mean jihad in general, whilst the word qital is used to mean jihad as armed combat .

As for the fuqaha, the Hanafi school of thought define jihad as calling to Islam, and fighting against those who do not accept the call, with your wealth or your life. The rest of the ulama besides those of the Hanafi school of thought, give roughly similar definitions. For example, the ulama from the Syafi`ii school of thought believe that jihad is to fight the unbelievers to achieve victory for Islam. To Sayid Sabiq, jihad is to allocate all efforts and the best of ability, as well as face all difficulties, to fight the enemy and to fend off their attack. Ahmad Muhammad Al-Hufy explained that jihad is waging war for the sake of Allah as obligated by syara', in facing those who are hostile to the religion, or to defend the land of the Muslims from the enemies of Islam.

From these opinions of the ulama, we can see that there is a specific, as well as, general meaning for jihad.

Levels of Jihad

Ibn Qayyim explained that jihad has four levels (martabat) i.e. ;

- a. Jihad on the nafs (self and ego)
- b. Jihad on Satan
- c. Jihad on unbelievers
- d. Jihad on the munafiq

Briefly, the explanation for each of them is as follows;

a. Jihad on one's own self

Jihad on one's own self, in turn, has four levels;

- i. Jihad to acquire hidayah (guidance from Allah) and the true religion
- ii. Jihad in practising knowledge acquired
- iii. Jihad in disseminating knowledge and teaching others who do not know about it
- iv. Jihad in being patient with difficulties faced in preaching

b. Jihad on Satan

This type of jihad has two levels;

- i. Jihad to reject various evil thoughts and doubts about faith that Satan implant in man.
- ii. Jihad to reject evil desires and passion.

c. Jihad against unbelievers

d. Jihad against the munafiq (hypocrite)

Jihad against unbelievers and the munafiq (hypocrite) have four levels;

- i. Jihad with one's heart (spiritual, emotional)
- ii. Jihad with one's tongue (verbal)
- iii. Jihad with one's wealth (financial)
- iv. Jihad with one's life (physical)

Against disbelievers, the pinnacle of jihad is physical jihad, whilst against the hypocrites, the pinnacle is verbal jihad.

Jihad against oppressors, those who commit bid`ah (heresy) and transgression against Allah is of three levels, starting with the most worthy;

- i. Jihad with the hand
- ii. Jihad with the tongue
- iii. Jihad in the heart

It may be concluded that even from the past, the ulama did not limit jihad to mean war, but viewed it broadly. Even though each Muslim is obligated to be involved in jihad, one must contribute the best of what one is capable of.

With this explanation, we hope to correct the misconception that some non-Muslims have about jihad: that jihad only means war. Worse still, just because Islam honours jihad, they may then misconstrue that it is a violent religion that likes to go to war.

We also reject a similar misconception amongst some Muslims who only understand jihad in its specific meaning of war, leading to extremist or terrorist fixations. They equate striving for the sake of Allah with taking up arms. Hence they direct all their efforts there without any consideration for the broader meaning of jihad, or that different areas of it have to be prioritised based on individual and communal capacities and needs, or that establishing Islam is dependent on the context and environment.

The Most Honoured Jihad

In one hadith, Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said;

“And the pinnacle (of Islam) is jihad” (Related by At-Turmuzi)

Every Muslim is obliged to accept whatever was said by Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). However, the above statement is not only to be accepted because it came from Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), but also because it is highly logical. Anyone who appreciates the difficulties in jihad and in nurturing the values of jihad in oneself will understand why jihad is said to be the pinnacle of the Islam. That explains why, especially for jihad in its specific meaning of going to war, the rewards and honour bestowed upon it is unlike any bestowed upon other acts of worship. Allah Almighty says;

“Indeed, Allah has purchased of their believers, their persons and their belongings; for theirs (in return) is the Garden (of Paradise): they fight in His Cause, and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him in truth, through the Torah, the Gospel, and the Quran: and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in the bargain which you have concluded: that is the achievement supreme.” (The Holy Quran 9: 111)

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said;

“Anyone among the Muslims who goes to war for the sake of Allah for the equivalent of the milking time (a short while), obligatory for him are the Heavens, and anyone who is wounded or befallen with misfortune in the Way of Allah, he will be resurrected on the Day of Reckoning in his original form. His colour (blood) will be as za`faran with the fragrance of lime.” (Related by Abu Daud, An-Nasa`ii and At-Turmuzi)

The honour for jihad in its meaning of war, may be seen from the status of syahid accorded to those who died for its cause, the rewards for which are not allocated to other types of worship. Allah Almighty says;

“Think not of those who are slain in Allah’s way as dead. No, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord; they rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah, and rejoice for those left behind, who have not yet joined them (in their bliss), that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve.” (The Holy Quran 3: 169-170)

Considerations About Jihad

It is important to appreciate that even though jihad in the form of war is the most honoured act of worship, it does not mean that it is the most preferred solution for every context. Other considerations must be taken into account, such as the relative magnitude of the resulting benefits and harm, the preparations available, the issue faced and who the enemy is.

Although war as jihad is honoured, it is not the only means for all people in all situations. That is why Ibn Qayyim prescribes jihad in various forms and levels to suit different people and situations.

Besides that, Islam establishes differences in priority among the preferred acts of worship. For example, acts that are compulsory (wajib) are to be prioritised above those that are just highly encouraged (sunnat). Therefore, even for jihad, one must look at the priorities for the particular context in deciding which of the various forms of jihad is most pertinent.

To illustrate, the ulama say that one cannot try to hinder disobedience to God if it will result in a bigger disobedience or detriment.

Jihad is, in general, honoured. However, the specific prerequisite to gain the honour, is for the jihad to fulfil the etiquette and conditions for jihad. Hence, there is no honour for those who go to war in the name of jihad if they disregard the principle of benefit versus harm, or cause a bigger harm.

When a situation does not warrant launching armed jihad, restraining oneself from doing so is considered jihad on one's own self and nafs. In this case, this is encouraged, and not condemned by the religion.

Furthermore, while jihad is a responsibility, the extent of responsibility differs from one person or community to another. For example, when a Muslim country is attacked, the ones with the biggest responsibility to defend it are its own citizens. If they are not sufficient, then the responsibility will next fall on those nearest to it, and so on.

If one understands jihad in its narrow meaning, limiting it to only war, or understand jihad as the most honourable act for all situations, one will be inclined to fall into extremism, because one sees jihad as the only means to resolve issues, or becomes obsessed with trying to gain the honour for jihad, that one carries it out without considering the situation and its reality.

The responsibility for jihad may be fardu `ain (obligated upon the individual) or fardu kifayah (obligated upon the community) depending on the circumstances. Determining whether jihad is fardu `ain or kifayah in a particular circumstance, is ijthadi (open to interpretation) and hence khilaf (differences in opinion) among various parties is allowed. As such, it is alright for a person who believes that armed jihad is fardu kifayah for his context, to opt against armed jihad, choosing instead to be active in other forms of jihad.

He should not be condemned for his action as Allah Almighty is the one to decide on his reckoning.

Based on the above, we cannot judge a person as being lax or neglectful just because he does not participate in armed jihad, or because he prefers other forms of jihad.

In fact Allah Almighty has reminded;

“Nor should the Believers all go forth together: if a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion and admonish the people when they return to them, - that thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil).” (The Holy Quran 9: 122)

Hadith also mention various groups of people who do not perform jihad, yet gain the same rewards as those who do.

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said;

“Whoever prepares the needs of people who fight for the sake of Allah, indeed he has gone to war, and whoever looks after the family of those who fight for the sake of Allah, indeed he has gone to war.” (Related by Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

“Indeed, there are some people (remaining) in Madinah. Never do you cover a distance or cross a valley (in jihad) but they are with you in gaining rewards. They have been detained by illness. (Related by Muslim)

That is moderation on the issue of jihad.

2. What is the link between Jihad and Syahid?

Classical scholars regarded as martyrs any Muslim killed during armed jihad, whether in battle or subsequently from an injury. Martyrs are believed to be accorded with privileges and rewards that they will enjoy in the afterlife.

Reformist concept of martyrdom is not limited to death resulting from fighting against non-Muslims. Muhammad `Abduh asserts that any person who dies while performing any good deed for the sake of Allah is a martyr.

3. How do we fight our own jihad?

First begin with self – intellectually, spiritually, physically and psychologically.

Secondly, understand that the types of jihad that remain relevant today are dependent upon the different needs and situations of Muslims in a particular area and can therefore change from one place to another.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) characterizes jihad in a hadith as the peak of Islamic worship. This is the general position of jihad in Islam. It is considered as the most noble of deeds because it requires a great deal of sacrifice and is among the most challenging to carry out. This is so, when a community is attacked and subjected to the aggression by others.

However, this does not mean that it is the only and most preferred solution for all problems concerning Muslims, in all kinds of situations and locations.

As Islam is a comprehensive religion, it offers a range of options and approaches, guided by its strict ethical code and system, for its adherents to solve their problems. As we have explained before, jihad does not only mean to carry arms. In fact, the focus of Islam is on peaceful resolution to all problems.

The leaders of the Muslim community in that area should make an evaluation of the most pressing problems facing the particular community and assign their priorities.

Based on this argument, armed jihad is not an obligation upon every Muslim community in all parts of the world, as each area would have their own unique set of problems and thus, a differing order of priorities.

Social and economic problems and the lack of education beset many Muslim societies the world over. These are certainly priorities that must be addressed immediately and the responsibility of doing so falls upon both leaders and communities. All these are also great jihad.

No doubt the usage of terms such as jihad against poverty, intellectual jihad, economic jihad etc. are new but this does not render them null and void, as their meanings are in-line with that of the wider jihad and the precepts of the Syari'ah.

However, the introduction of these meanings of jihad is not to replace, obscure or deny the other forms of jihad, including armed jihad. Its purpose is to guide us to refocus our energies and realign our priorities based on today's context.

At practical and personal level, Muslim needs to make analysis by answering the following questions:

- In view of the wider meaning of jihad, what are the challenges or problem faced by Muslims here? List then in accordance to level of priority.
- In view of the multiple means of jihad, what are the available means?
- In view of Islam's preference of peace, choose all non-violent means and list them in accordance to level of priority (most needed and effective for the most important challenge/problem, matched with capability)
- In view of Islam's preference of order, choose legal means only.
- Identify area that we are most effective and then acquire necessary skill, knowledge and technology.

4. Which comes first, Islam before country or country before Islam?

This question is problematic because it presumes Islam and country as two distinct and separate entities.

Islam and state share common spaces i.e. preservation of life and property, preservation of peace and security, establishing justice, eliminating injustices, welfare for citizens.

In areas where Islam and state share common space, there is no need to choose between the two.

Islam is for all that are goods, even if they come from non-Muslims. Islam is against injustices, even if they are from Muslims.

In fact, jihad in Islam is not only to defend Muslims. Islam permits Muslims to carry arms to defend those who are oppressed or persecuted irrespective of their race or religion (The Quran, 22:40). The Quran states that God will ensure that a group of people who can reject and stop the evils and aggressions from another group will emerge till all the mosques, churches and other places of worship are saved from destruction. This indicates that rejecting evil deeds of any kind is not just to ensure the safety of Muslims, but the safety of all. In this, it is very clear that Islam is an inclusive religion, which seeks to secure the rights and safety of all members of a society. This is also in line with Islam being a religion of mercy for all mankind.

The choice has to be made only when there is a conflict between Islam and state. If state inclines towards injustices i.e. seek to invade lands of others with no just reason or cause injustices to its citizens, Muslim should not be on the side of the state.

However, this does not mean Muslim must take arms or rebel.

According to international law, it is wrong for state to wage war that without a just cause. Thus, Muslim citizens can protest. Muslim member of armed forces can either resign, become conscientious objector or other options depending on the balance of maslahah and mafsadah. This is a universal position that Muslims should not apologise for it.

5. How can Muslims all over the world contribute and help to those in Syria, Iraq, Mogadishu and Palestine?

Ordinary Singapore citizens should not be involved in any armed conflict in other countries because of the following reasons:

- a. It will compromise the safety and interests of the nation.
- b. It violates the laws of the country.
- c. Each Muslim individual is needed to develop the Muslim community in Singapore.
- d. Islam demands that its followers prioritize their duties and obligations to their nearest communities before rendering assistance to those who are further away.

- e. It will result in a variety of problems for the Muslims in Singapore.
- f. There are other legal channels to assist those who are oppressed.

A Muslim can do this by showing sympathy and support for the Muslim communities who are oppressed like the Palestinians. However, he should observe the following:

- a. It should be done by taking into consideration the realities of one's position.
- b. It should be carried out according to the laws where one resides.
- c. It should take into account one's capabilities and current priorities.

Among the things that can be done are:

- a. Offer prayers of peace and restoration of calm to the societies involved. Supplicate for the oppressed after each prayer or any other suitable times.
- b. Offer financial assistance through trusted organisations that channel aid to humanitarian missions.
- c. Always stay informed about their problems through various news sources.
- d. Raise awareness of all parties involved regarding the oppression by disseminating accurate information about them.
- e. Participate in humanitarian relief missions organized by trusted and recognized agencies.
- f. Cooperate with various parties to achieve a peaceful solution by organizing various activities like conferences, petitions, exhibitions and reading materials.

However, it is important to note that Islam calls for a struggle against all forms of oppression on earth, regardless of whether it affects Muslims or others.

6. Is Jihad a fardhu ain for Muslims? Then what about ISIS, Boko Haram and Taliban?

In principle, armed jihad is fardhu kifayah - an obligation which if carried out by a section of the Muslim community, the other Muslims are not required to carry out.

The ruling can become fardhu ain - individual obligation only if:

- a. The country in which a community resides has been attacked illegally and the government makes a general call to war on its people.
- b. If someone becomes a professional in the army or security forces.

Yes, classical Muslim scholars ruled that if an inch of Muslim's land is seized then it becomes incumbent on all Muslims to liberate it through armed jihad. Similar views are also expressed by many contemporary Muslim scholars.

However, this ruling primarily applies to Muslims who live the affected lands.

Muslim scholars disagree to what extent the ruling effect Muslims who live far away from the land, especially when people of the invaded Muslim land have no capacity to repel the enemy on their own.

The preferred position for Muslims living in lands that are far away is jihad remains fardhu kifayah because Muslims are needed in these lands too, there are interests of Islam that need to be protected too and Muslim can still contribute in other ways in view of wide meaning of and diverse means of jihad.

Some scholars would even view that jihad is encouraged (sunnah) only in this situation.

Extract from Moderation in Islam (see Question 1)

The responsibility for jihad may be fardu `ain (obligated upon the individual) or fardu kifayah (obligated upon the community) depending on the circumstances . Determining whether jihad is fardu `ain or kifayah in a particular circumstance, is ijthadi (open to interpretation) and hence khilaf (differences in opinion) among various parties is allowed. As such, it is alright for a person who believes that armed jihad is fardu kifayah for his context, to opt against armed jihad, choosing instead to be active in other forms of jihad. He should not be condemned for his action as Allah Almighty is the one to decide on his reckoning.

Based on the above, we cannot judge a person as being lax or neglectful just because he does not participate in armed jihad, or because he prefers other forms of jihad.

In fact Allah Almighty has reminded;

“Nor should the Believers all go forth together: if a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion and admonish the people when they return to them, - that thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil).” (The Holy Quran 9: 122)

Hadith also mention various groups of people who do not perform jihad, yet gain the same rewards as those who do.

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said;

“Whoever prepares the needs of people who fight for the sake of Allah, indeed he has gone to war, and whoever looks after the family of those who fight for the sake of Allah, indeed he has gone to war.” (Related by Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

“Indeed, there are some people (remaining) in Madinah. Never do you cover a distance or cross a valley (in jihad) but they are with you in gaining rewards. They have been detained by illness. (Related by Muslim)

The Quran does not condemn every persons who does not participate directly in armed jihad,

“Such of the believers as remain passive - other than the disabled - cannot be deemed equal to those who strive hard in God's cause with their possessions and their lives: God has exalted those who strive hard with their possessions and their lives far above those who remain passive. Although God has promised the ultimate good unto all [believers], yet has God exalted those who strive hard above those who remain passive by [promising them] a mighty reward.” (The Holy Quran, 4:95)

ISIS’ “jihad” is not jihad as thought by Islam. ISIS has been condemned by hundreds of Muslim scholars all over the world across all major schools and orientations. See <http://haniff.sg/en/short-articles/an-analysis-of-muslim-voices-against-is/>

Boko Haram is not dissimilar from ISIS. All the arguments against ISIS are applicable to Boko Haram. By analogy, Boko Haram takes the same ruling.

Taliban has a record of excesses in waging “jihad”.

Syrian people may have legitimate grievances against Assad regime i.e. unjust and authoritarian regime. However, the issue is, why armed revolution to achieve regime change?

Listen to <http://haniff.sg/odio/audio-ceramah-konflik-syria-faham-sejarah-sikap-yang-saksama/>

Extract from Questions and Answers on Jihad

Organizing an armed rebellion against an authoritarian regime known for its cruelty and injustice is not encouraged by Islam as there is a high likelihood of bloodshed and the killing of innocents, all of which are sinful acts. Furthermore, in certain situations, armed rebellion may be counter-productive, that is, it may serve to strengthen the position of the authoritarian government.

This does not mean to say that Islam asks of its followers to endure the injustices inflicted by such regime. Instead, Muslims must strive to improve the situation by dispensing advice or using other options besides armed rebellion. History has witnessed many examples of authoritarian governments who were successfully replaced without the process of armed rebellion.

Extract from Moderation in Islam

Dealing with Fasiq (Morally Corrupt) Muslim Leaders & Government

Islam is a religion to be conveyed. Islam demands its ummah to enjoin good and forbid evil (amar ma'aruf and nahi munkar) without exceptions.

In fact, Islam makes the duty of islah (correction or counsel) towards leaders and the government as one of the preferred jihad. Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said;

“The most preferred jihad is (to present) the truth to leaders who have deviated.” (Related by At-Turmuzi & Ibn Majah)

However, there is much evidence (dalil) that Islam does not encourage its ummah to withdraw obedience from a fasiq (morally corrupt) leader. Islam only demands that its ummah avoid the vice perpetrated by the leaders, strive to change it with wisdom, mau'izah hasanah (good advice) and gracious debate if they are able to, or at least disobey in their heart. Islam commands its ummah to have patience in effecting change.

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said;

“Anyone who sees something that he hates in his leader, should be patient. Indeed, anyone who leaves the jemaah, he dies a jahiliyah death” (Related by Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

Most ulama of the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah consider it as haram to withdraw from the authority of fasiq (morally corrupt) Muslim leaders, what more to take up arms against them.

Imam An-Nawawi said;

““As for rebelling against them and fighting them, this is forbidden according to the consensus of the Muslims [ulama], even if they were impious, oppressors.”

“... it is not allowed to rebel against the caliphs simply due to oppression or impiety, as long as they do not change any of the foundations of Islam. ”

Al-Kirmani said;

“The fuqaha (jurists) all agree that the Imam (leader) who has taken over power must be obeyed as long as he establishes the congregational prayers and the jihad. [This is so] unless he commits a clear kufr [infidelity] in which it is obligatory to do so. Indeed, [in that case] it is obligatory to struggle against him by those who have the ability to do so”

Al`Aini said;

“It is not mubah (permissible) to remove him (a ruler) from his rule of that (fasiq and wickedness). ”

Ibn Taimiyah said;

“He [the Prophet] has ordered them to obey and forbade them from removing the people from their positions and he has ordered them to stand for the truth ”

“This clarifies that the leaders, who are the rulers and those in charge of affairs, are to be disliked and rebuked whenever they bring an act of disobedience to them. However one does not remove his hand from obedience to them. Instead, one obeys them for the sake of Allah. [It also shows] that some of them are good and some of them are evil. ”

Ibn Abi Al-`Iz said;

“It is obligatory to obey the authorities although they have deviated, because disobedience will cause much more damage than that caused by their deviation. To be patient with their deviation will eliminate sin and multiply rewards. ”

Although some ulama say that leaders who commit kufr acts may be opposed if there is clear evidence, they obviously do not encourage any form of armed resistance, as it often causes bloodshed, damage and a much bigger detriment.

Al-Kirmani said;

“... a ruler is not removed due to impiety as in removing him there will be civil war, spilling of blood and disunity. The evil and harm of removing him is greater than what occurs if he remains. ”

Ibn Battal said;

“The jurists all agree that it is obligatory to obey and make jihad with the ruler who has taken control of him. Obeying him is better than rebelling against him. [This option] prevents the spilling of blood and repels catastrophe... There is no exception to that unless the ruler falls into blatant kufr [infidelity]. ”

Ibn Taimiyah said;

“It has been determined by the Ahlus Sunnah ulama that going to war in a situation full of fitnah (tribulations) should be avoided, based on authentic hadith from Rasulullah s.a.w. They treat this as a matter of aqidah, and commanded patience in facing deviation by the leaders and in refusing to wage war on them, although many of the experts in knowledge and religion have waged war against them before this. ”

Ibn Taimiyah said;

“The opinion of the Ahl Sunnah settled on the view that fighting must be avoided during civil wars due to the authentic hadith confirmed from the Prophet (p.b.u.h). They [the Ahl Sunnah] then began to mention their creeds. They ordered patience in the face of the injustice of their rulers and [they ordered] avoiding fighting against them. [This was their conclusion] although a number of people of knowledge and had fought in civil wars.”

On the viewpoint of the Salaf allowing war against oppressive leaders, Ibn Hajar said;

“They used to believe in using the sword; that is, they believed in armed rebellion against unjust rulers. That was an old opinion among the early scholars. However, the issue settled upon abandoning that as it was seen that such an act leads to something even greater [in harm]. The events of Al-Harrah and Ibn Al-Ashath and others are indeed lessons for whoever reflects.”

Asy-Syaukani said;

“.....It is not allowed to fight against the rulers with the sword, as long as they are establishing prayers.”

The above opinion of the ulama is also based on the prohibition for the Muslim ummah to wage war against each other.

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said;

“To revile a Muslim is fasiq and to wage war against him is kufur.” (Related by Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

“When two Muslims meet with their swords, the one who kills and the one killed will both be in Hell.” (Related by Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

“Do not return to kufr after my time, (by) smiting each other’s necks.” (Related by Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

The ulama adopted this stand after witnessing various outcomes of armed resistance and opposition against the authorities, as in the Siffin War between Ali r.a and Mu`awiyah, Hussein’s challenge against the Bani Umayyah, the Battle of Al-Harrah, and Abdullah b. Az-Zubair’s revolt.

Such is the stand of the past ulama about opposing an Islamic authority. This does not mean they were passively accepting disobedience to God, because they still enjoined and carried out amar ma’ruf (enjoining good) and nahi munkar (forbidding evil), and counselled against wrongdoing. Their commitment to do so, even in the face of the authorities, is recorded in many incidents in history, as in the case of Imam Ahmad b Hanbal.

Undeniably, there are a few ulama who consider it as mubah (permissible) to be involved in armed opposition, and even obligatory in certain situations. However, the opinions of the majority of the ulama is stronger and nearer to the truth.

7. If we don't enjoin jihad in helping our fallen brethren, does it mean that we are a munafiq?

We must not link the issue of non-participation in jihad with nifaq, kufr or fisq. We must not be judgmental on this issue because:

- a. The issue of jihad is contentious at many levels; the right cause, the right means, fardhu ain or kifayah etc. as mentioned above and below.
- b. Ruling a person as munafiq, fasiq or kafir is a serious matter in Islam.

“.....And neither shall you defame one another, nor insult one another by [opprobrious] epithets: evil is all imputation of iniquity after [one has attained to] faith; and they who [become guilty thereof and] do not repent - it is they, they who are evildoers!” (The Holy Quran, 49:11)

In view of the contentious nature of the issue, prudence requires not to make ruling of nifaq, fasiq and kufr when facing differences on this issue.

Let just debate this as a branch of jurisprudential issue.

On takfir from Moderation in Islam

“If a man says to his brother ‘O, kafir’, then surely one of them is (kafir).” (Related by Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

“And whoever kills a life he will be tormented in Hell. And to curse a Muslim, is the same as killing him. And whoever calls another Muslim kufr, it is the same as killing him.” (Related by Al-Bukhari & Ahmad)

“Whoever calls a man ‘kufr’ or said ‘O, enemy of Allah’, when he is not one, (the accusation) will rebound to him.” (Related by Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

“A man does not call another as fasiq or kufr, except that he will be the apostate if the other is actually not.” (Related Al-Bukhari)

As takfir is a very serious issue in Islam, the ulama always warn of the danger and the gravity of doing it, and are always careful on this subject.

The book Syarh Al-`Aqidah At-Tahawiyah states that;

“Let it be known that the topic about committing takfir or not to do it, is a vast topic filled with trouble and trials. Much disunity has been caused by it. In it is a maze of views and nafs (ego) that are mutually conflicting. ”

It is not mubah (permissible) for a Muslim to engage in takfir unless it is based on clear and indisputable evidence.

In deciding on whether the respective people has no sufficient capacity to carry the obligation on their own and to what extent the obligation is transferred to other Muslim community is not a simple problem in which an absolute result can be obtained. It is a matter of judgment or ijtiḥad. In such situation, often, differences of opinion occur and are unavoidable. When the result of ijtiḥad differs, after each party follow a standard ijtiḥad methodology, one cannot claim his opinion is absolutely right and dismiss others as wrong or misleading. In such a situation, it is permissible for a Muslim who views armed jihad as fardu kifayah to choose not to join it and instead perform other forms of jihad. He should not be condemned for his action and his action should be best left to be judged by God.

Based on the above understanding, one should not judge a person as being careless or neglectful merely because he does not participate in armed jihad or because he prefers other forms of jihad. His stand is not totally unfounded because the Quran says:

“With all this, it is not desirable that all of the believers take the field [in time of war]. From within every group in their midst, some shall refrain from going forth to war, and shall devote themselves [instead] to acquiring a deeper knowledge of the Faith, and [thus be able to] teach their home-coming brethren, so that these [too] might guard themselves against evil.” (The Quran, 9:122)

and the Prophet also has said that there are various groups of people who although were not involved in armed jihad, received the same rewards from Allah as those who carried out armed jihad. The Prophet has said in hadiths:

“Whoever provides provisions for people who fight for the sake of Allah, indeed he has gone to war, and whoever looks after the families of those who fight for the sake of Allah, he has gone to war.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

“Indeed, there are several among you in Madinah, those you do not see on the pathways or crossing the valleys, but they are with you in gaining rewards. They are restrained by illness. (Narrated by Muslim)

Assuming that the ruling of jihad as fardhu ain is accepted, there is another important aspect that needs to be considered before armed jihad can be waged which is prioritising

of responsibilities because armed jihad is not the only fardhu ain burdened on the shoulders of the Muslims at any particular point in time.

Prioritising is essential in Islam. Islamic practices are regulated by a dynamic system of prioritising.

This is again a matter of judgment (ijtihad) by the Muslim scholars in which differences in opinion may be inevitable.

For example, while the protection of Muslim's life requires Muslim to avenge thousands of Muslims' life in various lands, there are also thousands of other Muslims' life that are loss from poverty, poor living condition and under development such as in Somalia which one must admit, also requires urgent attention and Muslims' care.

The question that need to be raised here is, "is prioritising armed jihad above other fardhu ain an absolute rule on all Muslims in all parts of the world without give due consideration to each Muslim community's context? Is armed jihad as a means of liberating Muslims' lands an absolute or the only option to all Muslims with no regard to their context or circumstances vis-à-vis other Islamic obligations?"

It is argued here that the answer is no. Islam requires its followers to give due consideration to context in practicing the religion. This means Islam takes into account the reality of the time, environment, individual and other factors in determining rules and in practising the religion. Hence, the ruling for a certain matter may be different due to differences in reality. This applies whether the rule is a general policy for society, or specific to an individual or a particular group only.

In conclusion, even if Muslims agree that the Palestinian's struggle against the Israeli occupation is a legitimate jihad and armed jihad in Palestine has fall in the category of fardhu ain, this does not mean that every Muslim should adopt similar approach, strategy or means like the Palestinians or occupy themselves with the issue only until the occupied territory is liberated regardless of the priority or constraint determine by their specific contexts.

8. Why do non-Muslims associate Jihad with terrorism

One reason is the existence of Muslims who commit terrorism in the name of jihad.

This is a fact, not a myth. Muslims should not be in denial with respect to this problem.

Terrorism perpetrated by Muslim is not new. It occurred in Egypt since throughout 1970s and 1980s. Then, it was an accepted fact. The groups that committed terrorism in these years then played significant part in the founding of Al-Qaeda which later on mutated to ISIS today.

This is not to say that all incidents of terrorism attributed to Muslims are true or terrorism is exclusive problem of Muslims.

But to deny terrorism problem from Muslims is factually wrong and dangerous because the problem will not be addressed until Muslims recognise it and failure to address the problem will have serious impact of Islam and Muslims.

Another reason is, of course, misrepresentation of Islam by Islamophobes in the form of individual, organisation and media.

Islamophobia is real, not a myth. There are many studies that have been published on this.

The first requires reflection and correction. The second requires organised effort to counter-Islamophobia and mitigate its effect on other non-Muslims at large.

9. How can Muslims say that our religion was never spread by the sword when Muslims enjoin battles?

Firstly, the existence of shariah of jihad is not an argument for Islam is the religion of sword. Similar injunction can be found in Christian and Jewish Bible too but the same image is not attributed to Christianity and Judaism (except by secularist and atheist). There is no doubt that there were Muslim rulers in the past that sought power and conquest in the name of religion.

However, a distinction must be made between the conduct of Muslims and the teachings of Islam. The latter is known from the scriptures – the Quran and the Prophet's tradition – and, to a certain extent, the intellectual traditions left behind by Muslim scholars over one millennium and a half.

With regard to the scriptures, few important notes can be made;

- at most, they are ambiguous on the issue whether Islam should be spread by sword. In other words, they could be interpreted both ways that Islam is a religion of peace, tolerance and persuasion or a religion of sword, violence and force.
- Islamic scriptures contain much less violence than Christian and Jewish Bible. See Deuteronomy as example. There isn't a figure similar to Biblical Joshua in the Quran. Yet, Christianity and Judaism are regarded as more pacifist religion.

Factors that give greater weight to Islam the religion of peace understanding;

- violence and armed jihad were forbidden in the first thirteen years of the prophethood despite intense persecution. Why in the face of persecution violence was forbidden? Why the restraint when God promise to protect His servants and victory?
- only one (Shafi`ii) out of four major mazhabs holds that disbelief is a legitimate cause of armed jihad. The other three (Hanafi, Maliki and Hanbali) view self-defence as the

only legitimate cause. Why would three major mazhabs view otherwise if it is very clear that Islam seeks to convert people with sword?

- Islam was spread in Southeast Asia and China not by military conquest. This covers large area of lands and millions of people. Indonesia is the largest Muslim country (approximate: 87% of 202 million Indonesians are Muslims). China contains about 20 million Muslims based on official number. Unofficial number could be greater which means the number of Muslims in China could be more than the number of Arab Muslims. If not conviction, would millions of people convert to Islam and continue to remain so for hundred years?
- Mongols who conquered Muslims (Mongol) became Muslims and later on became protectors of the religion. Why would Mongols who defeated Muslims by sword accepted Islam and abandon their traditional faith?
- History records that Muslims' conduct of war was more exemplary than their opponents (read history of crusade), they were welcomed by people of the conquered lands and the treatment of non-Muslims in Muslim empires was much better than Muslims living in non-Muslim lands (read history of Spanish Reconquista).

In view of ambiguity of text, what factors that influence Muslims to justify armed jihad for the purpose of spreading Islam;

- Nature of man - follow desire, absolutism etc.
- Context - context that tilts balance towards force, open door for abuse of text.
- The influence of Satan.

In conclusion, the factor that tilts the balance for Islam the religion of sword viewpoint is not located primary in the scriptural texts, but external to them. Also, factors that shape the image of Islam and Muslims are not inherent in Muslims only. There are forces outside of Muslims that cannot and do not want to see other image of Islam, forces that intentionally seek to paint negative image of Islam and non-Muslims who misunderstood and misrepresent Islam out of ignorance.

Islam does not view all non-Muslims are alike – hostile, stubborn, extremist or seek to destroy Islam.

The Quran says:

“[But] they are not all alike: among the followers of earlier revelation there are upright people, who recite God's messages throughout the night, and prostrate themselves [before Him]. They believe in God and the Last Day, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and vie with one another in doing good works: and these are among the righteous. And whatever good they do, they shall never be denied the reward thereof: for, God has full knowledge of those who are conscious of Him.” (The Holy Quran, 3:113-5)

“As for such [of the unbelievers] as do not fight against you on account of [your] faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for, verily, God loves those who act equitably. God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of [your] faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid [others] in driving you forth: and as for those [from among you] who turn towards them in friendship; it is they, they who are truly wrongdoers!” (The Holy Quran, 60:8-9)

For more details, see <http://haniff.sg/en/long-articles/reflecting-ben-affleck-v-bill-maher-debate-they-all-are-not-alike-the-quran-3113/>

Recommended Readings

- Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*, New York: Knopf, 2014.
- Richard Bonney, *Jihad: From Qur'an to Bin Laden*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.