

What is Jihad?

by Daniel Pipes  
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<http://www.danielpipes.org/990/what-is-jihad>

What does the Arabic word jihad mean?

One answer came last week, when Saddam Hussein had his Islamic leaders appeal to Muslims worldwide to join his jihad to defeat the “wicked Americans” should they attack Iraq; then he himself threatened the United States with jihad.

As this suggests, jihad is “holy war.” Or, more precisely: It means the legal, compulsory, communal effort to expand the territories ruled by Muslims at the expense of territories ruled by non-Muslims.

The purpose of jihad, in other words, is not directly to spread the Islamic faith but to extend sovereign Muslim power (faith, of course, often follows the flag). Jihad is thus unabashedly offensive in nature, with the eventual goal of achieving Muslim dominion over the entire globe.

Jihad did have two variant meanings through the centuries, one more radical, one less so. The first holds that Muslims who interpret their faith differently are infidels and therefore legitimate targets of jihad. (This is why Algerians, Egyptians and Afghans have found themselves, like Americans and Israelis, so often the victims of jihadist aggression.) The second meaning, associated with mystics, rejects the legal definition of jihad as armed conflict and tells Muslims to withdraw from the worldly concerns to achieve spiritual depth.

Jihad in the sense of territorial expansion has always been a central aspect of Muslim life. That’s how Muslims came to rule much of the Arabian Peninsula by the time of the Prophet Muhammad’s death in 632. It’s how, a century later, Muslims had conquered a region from Afghanistan to Spain. Subsequently, jihad spurred and justified Muslim conquests of such territories as India, Sudan, Anatolia, and the Balkans.

Today, jihad is the world’s foremost source of terrorism, inspiring a worldwide campaign of violence by self-proclaimed jihadist groups:

The International Islamic Front for the Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders: Osama bin Laden’s organization;

Laskar Jihad: responsible for the murder of more than 10,000 Christians in Indonesia;

Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami: a leading cause of violence in Kashmir;

Palestinian Islamic Jihad: the most vicious anti-Israel terrorist group of them all;

Egyptian Islamic Jihad: killed Anwar El-Sadat in 1981, many others since, and

Yemeni Islamic Jihad: killed three American missionaries on Monday.

But jihad’s most ghastly present reality is in Sudan, where until recently the ruling party bore the slogan “Jihad, Victory and Martyrdom.” For two decades, under government auspices, jihadists there have physically attacked non-Muslims, looted their belongings and killed their males.

Jihadists then enslaved tens of thousands of females and children, forced them to convert to Islam, sent them on forced marches, beat them and set them to hard labor. The women and older girls also suffered ritual gang-rape, genital mutilation and a life of sexual servitude.

Sudan's state-sponsored jihad has caused about 2 million deaths and the displacement of another 4 million – making it the greatest humanitarian catastrophe of our era.

Despite jihad's record as a leading source of conflict for 14 centuries, causing untold human suffering, academic and Islamic apologists claim it permits only defensive fighting, or even that it is entirely non-violent. Three American professors of Islamic studies colorfully make the latter point, explaining jihad as:

An “effort against evil in the self and every manifestation of evil in society” (Ibrahim Abu-Rabi, Hartford Seminary);  
“Resisting apartheid or working for women’s rights” (Farid Eseek, Auburn Seminary), and  
“Being a better student, a better colleague, a better business partner. Above all, to control one’s anger” (Bruce Lawrence, Duke University).

It would be wonderful were jihad to evolve into nothing more aggressive than controlling one’s anger, but that will not happen simply by wishing away a gruesome reality. To the contrary, the pretense of a benign jihad obstructs serious efforts at self-criticism and reinterpretation.

The path away from terrorism, conquest and enslavement lies in Muslims forthrightly acknowledging jihad's historic role, followed by apologies to jihad's victims, developing an Islamic basis for nonviolent jihad and (the hardest part) actually ceasing to wage violent jihad.

Unfortunately, such a process of redemption is not now under way; violent jihad will probably continue until it is crushed by a superior military force (Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, please take note). Only when jihad is defeated will moderate Muslims finally find their voice and truly begin the hard work of modernizing Islam.

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The following is a response from Abu Jamal (United Kingdom), Aug 21, 2003 at 07:28 in response to the above article. Much of what he states is found in Hizb's official Document on Jihad which is posted on this site.

Abu Jamal states, “As the west is putting the spotlight on Jihad with the aim of pacifying Muslims and leading them down the apologetic and embarrassed path, Muslims need to bear in mind the Shariah perspective to the exclusion of all others. In this way, we will not allow the intended change of Islam or its understanding which will prolong the West's domination of the world and the rise of Islam to liberate mankind from being enslaved to man-made ideologies.

Jihad is exhausting ones effort in fighting in the way of Allah directly or assisting by wealth or opinion or increasing numbers or other than that. The fighting to raise the word of Allah is jihad. As for jihad by opinion in the way of Allah, this is jihad is the opinion relates directly to fighting in the way of Allah. If it does not relate directly to this, it is not Shar'a jihad even if it involves difficulty and even if there results benefits in raising the word of Allah. This is because jihad in Shar'a is specific to fighting, so there enters within it everything related directly to fighting. Similar to the opinion is writing and speaking; they are jihad if they are related directly to fighting in the way of Allah like the speech to the

army to encourage it to fight directly or words inciting fighting the enemies. If not, they are not (jihad). Neither political struggle nor rebuking the rulers is termed jihad though their reward is high and their benefit to the Muslims great. The issue is not one of difficulty nor benefit, but rather it is the Shar'a meaning with which it came for this word. The Shari'ah meaning is fighting and all that it related to it of opinion, speech, writing, strategy and other (similar) things.

The cause of jihad is not jizyah even though we stop (fighting) them when they accept the jizyah. Rather, the cause of jihad is that those whom we fight are disbelievers (kuffar) who rejected the da'wah. The Supreme said: "Fight those who do not believe in Allah nor the Last Day, nor forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor follow the deen of truth among the People of the Book until they pay the jizyah from their hands while they are humiliated" [TMQ 9:29]. The command to fight them (due to) their attribute of disbelief (kufr) i.e. fight them because they do not believe in Allah and the Last Day etc...so this qualification is a restriction and at this point it becomes a cause (sabab). So the cause of fighting is disbelief. It came in another ayah: "O Prophet! Make Jihad against the unbelievers and the hypocrites and be firm against them. Hell shall be their home; and it is the worst of all homes". (Tawba 73) So the command to fight them is due to the attribute of disbelief. There are many similar ayat such as: "Fight the allies of Satan", "Fight the leaders of disbelief" "Fight the polytheists altogether" [TMQ ] which all command the fighting due to a specific attribute which is the cause of fighting i.e. disbelief.

As for the payment of jizyah, the Qur'an made it together with humiliation as the cause of stopping the fighting not the cause of fighting. From here, it came that the cause of jihad is disbelief. If those whom we fight accept the da'wah they become Muslims; if they refuse to accept Islam (but) accept to pay the jizyah and be ruled by Islam, it is accepted from them and they are not fought as it is not permitted to force them to accept Islam. As long as they accept to be ruled by it and pay the jizyah, they have submitted to the da'wah even if they have not accepted Islam. Accordingly, it is not allowed to fight them after they accept to be ruled by it and pay the jizyah. However, if they accept to pay the jizyah but refuse to be ruled by Islam, it is not allowed to accept this from them because the cause of fighting—which is that they are disbelievers who have refused to accept the da'wah—remains standing so fighting them remains obligatory, an obligation which has not fallen from the Muslims' necks. As for jizyah together with humiliation being a cause to stop fighting, this is only with non-polytheist Arabs. As for polytheist Arabs, it is not accepted from them except Islam or fighting due to the Supreme's statement: "You will fight them or they will become Muslims" [TMQ ].

Jihad is obligatory by the explicit text of the Qur'an and Hadith. The Supreme said: "Fight them so that there remains no (fitnah) and the deen belongs only for Allah"[TMQ 2: ] and He said: "Fight those who don't believe in Allah nor the Last Day, nor forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor follow the deen of truth among the People of the Book until they pay the jizyah from their hands while they are humiliated" [TMQ 9: 29] and the Supreme said: "If you do not go out (for jihad), He will punish you with a painful punishment" [TMQ 9: ] and He said: "O you who believe, fight those who encircle you of the disbelievers and let them find harshness in you" [TMQ 9: ]. From Anas who said: "The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: "Fight the polytheists with your wealth, your hands and your tongues" (narrated by An-Nisai). Also from Anas that the Prophet (SAW) said: "A morning in the way of Allah, or an evening, are better than the world and what is within it" (narrated by Al-Bukhari). He also narrated that he (SAW) said: "I was commanded to fight the people until they say 'There is no god but Allah'". Imam Ahmad and Abu Dawud narrated from Anas who said: The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: "...Jihad from when Allah sent me until the last of my Ummah fights the Dajjal. It will not be invalidated by the tyranny of the tyrant or the justice of the just (leader)."

From Zayd bin Khalid who said: The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: "Whoever prepares a warrior (ghazi) in the way of Allah has (also) fought, and whoever takes care of his family in goodness (khayr)

after him has (also) fought” (narrated by Ahmad). From ‘Ata bin Yazid al-Laithi that Abud Said al-Khudri (RA) related to him: “It was said: O Messenger of Allah, which of the people is better? The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: ‘A believer who does jihad in the way of Allah by his body and wealth’ (narrated by Al-Bukhari). And he (AS) said: “Whoever dies without fighting or his soul thinking of fighting has died upon a branch of hypocrisy.” From Abi Awfa that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: “Know that paradise is beneath the shade of swords” (narrated by Al-Bukhari). From Abu Hurayra who said: “One of the Sahabah of the Messenger of Allah (SAW) passed by a ravine with rivers of sweet water in it and was astounded by its beauty, so he said: What if I separated from the people and stayed in this ravine? But I will never do it until I seek permission from the Messenger of Allah (SAW) so he mentioned that to the Messenger of Allah who said: Do not do (so) for the standing of one of you in the way of Allah is better than his praying in his house for seventy years” (narrated by At-Tirmidhi).

Jihad is a collective obligation (fard kifayah) offensively (ibtida’a), and an individual obligation (fard ‘ayn) against the enemy who attacks them while being a collective obligation upon the rest. The obligation does not fall until the enemy is expelled and the Islamic land liberated from their filth. The meaning of jihad being a collective obligation offensively is that we start fighting the enemy even if they do not start (fighting) us. If no Muslim performs the fighting offensively at any period then they will be sinful for leaving it. If the people of Egypt perform the offensive jihad then (its obligation) falls from the people of Indonesia, as there existed practically fighting by Muslims against belligerent disbelievers so the obligation of jihad has occurred. However if fighting between Muslims and disbelievers but the sufficiency (kifayah) has not occurred by the people of Egypt fighting the disbelievers alone, then its obligation does not fall from the people of India and Indonesia by the performance of the people of Egypt and Iraq. Rather it is obligatory upon the nearest (Muslim) then the nearest to the enemy until sufficiency occurs; if sufficiency does not occur except with all the Muslims, then jihad becomes obligatory upon all the Muslims until the enemy is conquered/subdued. The (muhil) of jihad being a collective obligation is if the Khaleefah has not told him to advance; as for the one whom the Khaleefah has told him to advance, then jihad has become obligatory upon him due to the Supreme’s statement: “O you who believe, what is wrong with you that when it is said: ‘Go forth in the way of Allah’ you hold firm to the earth” [TMQ 9:] and his (SAW) statement: “And if you are asked to advance, then advance.” The meaning of the sufficiency of jihad in the Islamic State is that there rises for jihad a people whose fighting is sufficient; whether they are an army for whom there are books of accounts for this as was the case in the time of Umar, or they had prepared themselves for jihad freely as was the case in the time of Abu Bakr. It is the same whether these ones or these ones or both of them together such that if the enemy targets them occurs by them so it is a collective obligation upon them. If (al-mana’ah) does not occur through them, then the Khaleefah prepares other for jihad and so on. Offensive jihad does not mean that we initiate fighting the enemy directly; rather we must first call them to Islam.

If is not allowed for Muslims to fight those whom the Islamic da’wah has not reached; rather, the disbelievers must first be called to Islam. If they reject, then the jizyah; and if they reject, we fight them. Muslim narrated from Sulayman bin Buraydah from his father: “When the Messenger of Allah (SAW) appointed an Amir over an army or expedition, he would exhort him to fear Allah in his soul and to be good to those Muslims with him. Then he would say: Fight in the name of Allah, in the way of Allah. Fight those who disbelieve in Allah. Fight but do not betray, commit treachery, mutilate nor kill a child. When you meet your enemy among the polytheists then call them to three or such that whichever of them they respond to, accept from them and do not fight them. Then call them to Islam; if they are respond to you, accept from them and do not fight them. Then call them to move from their land to the land of the emigrants (Muhajireen) and inform them that if they do this then for them is what is due to the Muhajireen and against them is what is due from the Muhajireen. If they refuse to move from it, then tell them that they are like the bedouin Muslims upon whom does not run what rule of Allah which runs over the believers and there is no booty or spoils for them unless they fight jihad with the Muslims. If they

refuse, ask them the jizyah; if they respond to you, accept from them and do not fight them. If they refuse, seek help from Allah against them and fight them.” And from ibn Abbas: “The Messenger of Allah (SAW) never fought except that he invited them” (narrated by Ahmad). And from Furwat bin Maseek who said: “I said to Messenger of Allah, should I fight with those of my people advancing (against) those of them fleeing? He said: Yes. When I turned (to go), he called me and said: Do not fight them until you invite them to Islam.”