THE CENTRAL ISSUE

I remember those days when I would research works from Islamic scholars, thinkers, community activists and the likes, whom would give their two cents on why terrorism (i.e. jihad) is flawed. They would in unison touch on issues such as hijacking, kidnapping, 'suicide' bombings, killing of non-combatants and such in order to prove that al Qaeda's jihad against America is defective from a theologically based standpoint. Some would go as far as to say that al Qaeda are not even Muslims; and then lambast them as takfiri's! All of this bothered me as a Muslim living in America. The Muslims were so caught up in defending their identity in front of non-Muslims on issues such as the aforementioned, that it became a normal routine from the pulpits of California to the pits of Ground Zero to speak in both condemnation and defense. What I felt was that the central issue - what actually makes a jihadi into what he is - was never brought into light whether it be in the mosque study circles or political discussions on live television. This central issue, as I like to call it, is the pivot of what makes a Muslim begin his journey as a jihadi. No, it is not the mass slaughter of the Palestinians by the Israeli's nor the atrocious actions of America towards the Muslim world. It is not the jihadi anāshīd nor the jihadi films. It is not what you think because the central issue's makeup is entirely theological and fiqh based.

The central issue is that jihad is individually obligatory (fard 'ayn) on all Muslims from East to West until all of our lands are freed. The issue of jihad being fard 'ayn is the fulcrum of the modern jihad. The world is witnessing the rise of jihadi's because of the very fact that Muslims are becoming more aware of the central issue, and thus their obligation towards God.

This central issue was revived by whom is referred to as 'the godfather of jihad', the Islamic Scholar Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, may Allah have mercy upon him. It was his revival of this issue that brought countless of thousands of foreign fighters to Afghanistan to support their Afghan brethren against the Soviets. He really was the sole reason for the institution of what we now know as the global jihad. Others like Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri only came to further expand upon certain principles.[1] His works are full of the jurisprudence on the central issue.
The most famous of them, "Defense of the Muslim Lands: The first obligation after faith". It was a fatwa he presented in Saudi Arabia to a delegate of senior Islamic jurists and scholars including Ibn Uthayameen and Bin Baz, and there was unanimous agreement on the validity of his fatwa. His fatwa was inundated with innumerable classical scholars on the subject of defensive jihad (jihad ad-daf'); that is, what is the Islamic response when a foreign enemy attacks a Muslim country, even as much as a hand span. It cited these classical scholars as saying that it first becomes individually obligatory on the people of that locale. If they are unable to push back the enemy, then the obligation spreads in a radius, to the neighboring Muslims. If they too are unable, this radius continues to grow until it becomes individually obligatory from East to West; any Muslim who leaves the obligation when he is able to participate has sinned. During Prophet Muhammad's time, there was the battle of Tabook. It was a jihad classified as defensive and individually obligatory upon the people of Madina. Those who used feeble excuses to stay behind were known as the hypocrites of the community; their loyalty to Islam was in question. The argument Dr. Azzam brought forth was that this obligation started as early as the fall of Andalusia. Today, we have various lands that are occupied by foreign powers. Thus, the obligation has grown significantly today.

Throughout the book, Dr. Azzam rebuts the various excuses that the modern man presents such as fighting amongst sinners, the issue of communal obligation (fard kifāyah), and fighting without the permission of the ruler. Later, other scholars[2] have widened that scope of refutation to include excuses such as the enemy is superior in strength and numbers, the issue of the governments in the Muslim lands who have supposed ‘covenants’ with the disbelievers, and the case of those who claim that we have to be students of knowledge who have studied in Islamic madrassa’s for years and that we need to do more purification of the soul, etc.

Then something of major significance happened.

The idea of defending the Muslim lands from the disbelieving occupation forces had taken on a new meaning. It was an idea that paved the way for the al Qaeda Organization.

Mujahidin jurists and thinkers from Egypt who had the lengthiest and toughest experience in working for the re-establishment of an Islamic state in Egypt, exported the idea that the so-called Muslim governments in the Islamic lands are in fact occupation forces. Unless and until they are removed physically, the Muslims would be living in the same state of sin similar to that of a foreign disbelieving army occupying a Muslim land.
This idea was derived from the jurisprudence on how to deal with an apostate. Islamic law gives the death sentence to those who leave the religion.[3] An apostate is determined by the action he had done publicly. For instance, if he were to become a Christian, or spy on the Muslims for the disbelievers, or join the ranks of the enemy to fight the Muslims and such, he would have committed major disbelief (kufr akbar) as is recognized by our classical scholars in consent. Islamic scholars have given a little over ten major acts that would lead one to apostasy.[4] One has to be careful to not take some one outside the fold of Islam (i.e. takfīr) on major sins such as drinking alcohol, committing adultery, stealing and such unless if it’s a ruler who clearly permits these sins under his rule (i.e., istiḥlāl). The khawārij had an extreme creed that included all sinners into the category of apostasy. Praise be to Allah, the mujahidin of today are nothing like this.

The Egyptian mujahidin claimed that the rulers in the Muslim lands were apostates due to two main reasons. These included not ruling by shari’ah, and taking the disbelievers as helpers and guardians (awliyā’) against the Muslims. The first reason implies the issue of istiḥlāl, that is, making forbidden what Allah has made permitted and vice versa. Additionally it signals that they are ruling by man-made laws that include elements of Democracy[5], Jahiliyyah[6], and other borrowed forms of laws[7].

The second reason implies spying on the Muslims for the sake of the disbelievers, giving the disbelievers military and spy bases in their respective countries to fight the Muslims, actively participating in the murdering of Muslims for the sake of disbelievers, torturing, mistreating and even raping Muslims for the sake of gaining confidence from the disbelievers, and launching propaganda campaigns that include the justification of their methods and the distortion of Islamic teachings particularly on issues related to shari’ah, caliphate, jihad, ‘aqīdah and such.

All of this spells apostasy of a very high degree. The question then comes: within a modern government structure, just exactly who are the apostates? This ruling applies to all those within the government sectors that carry out the acts of disbelief.

In the verse, {They took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides Allah} [9:31],
Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi comments, “Although they did not prostrate, or bow down to their priests, they followed them and agreed with them in the forbiddance of the licit and with the permission of the illicit. Allah therefore considered that as making them lords and gods, because obedience in legislation is a worship, and must not be for anyone except Allah, since Allah is the only One who can enact legislation.”[8]

Today the Saudi monarchy is the prime example of this ugly apostasy. Their monarchy can be likened to dog dung wrapped in gold silk. They claim shari’ah as their law and use the haramain[9] to their advantage of clinging onto power and validity in the ummah. Besides pouring the ummah’s billions of dollars into their stomachs and pockets, they pour it into reconstruction of mosque structures, specifically the haramain, so that the Muslim visitors would feel welcome and comfortable. It is a planned strategy to gain the support of the worldwide ummah. Then sometimes they would make outrageous lies that al Qaeda has intentions to attack the pilgrims in Makkah during hajj season and that therefore the Saudi army would be there to protect the ummah.[10]

This is only the beginning. Then comes Saudi’s romantic relationship with America that includes military aid to fight Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula and in return the Crusaders are given military bases to launch wars against the Muslims around the world that go beyond the boundaries of their own laws in killing and weapon deployments; their protection of Israel from the Muslims; their childish interfaith dialogues that shamelessly calls for a new religion; the scholars they promote who justify anything that the government does[11]; their use of magic and communication with vile jinn’s to locate positions of the mujahidin[12]; and finally their torture dungeons that don’t even spare the elderly scholars.

The irony in all this is that their political interests take precedence over the religion, and their scholars are able to justify it. For instance, in the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, the Saudi’s held the Soviets as enemies. The al-Saud regime would even help their citizens safely reach Pakistan to cross the border into Afghanistan to bring the fight to the Soviet dogs. That was because there were no deals between the two states nor any greedy interests involved. That was the jihad against the Soviets; the enemy whom nearly the entire world despised.
But when jihad turned against America for its crimes against the Muslim world, the Saudi’s chose to align themselves with the Crusader’s using flimsy excuses like ‘we have a covenant with them’, ‘they are our strategic and political allies’, ‘they are helping us in this and this, and Islam doesn’t allow us to be ingrates’ and the likes.

The jihad against the Soviets, in the eyes of the Saudi’s, was a jihad for the sake of Allah. The jihad against the Americans, in the eyes of the Saudi’s, is a jihad that is ‘corrupt’. **We disbelieve in those who believe in jihad for the sake of America.**

The central issue is that jihad will remain fard 'ayn until America and her apostate allies are removed from the Muslim lands.

Her allies not only include the disbelievers of origin, but also the apostate tawāghīt that make the rich richer and the poor poorer, that fight the Muslims who wish to see tawḥīd established, and who modify the laws of Allah to fit their lifestyles. If the mujahidin were to leave the jihad altogether, then imagine what America would have been able to accomplish in Afghanistan and Iraq! Fitnah of all shades would roll out into the Muslim communities, adding open approval of sinful activity, kufr, shirk, and fasād. It would also undoubtedly give them supplementary power in the Islamic regions, making it possible for them to influence Muslims in religion, politics, and social life. All of this can already be seen in those areas that the mujahidin have not controlled. So why would any sane Muslim want to stand as an obstacle to the banner of tawḥīd – a banner which seeks the protection of the shari’ah’s sanctity? This is what central issue comes down to.

**Footnotes:**

[1] Which we will discuss shortly.

[2] Scholars such as Nasir bin Hamad al-Fahd, Anwar Sha’ban, Yusuf al-Uyayri, Abu Qatadah al-Filistini, Abu Yahya al-Libi, Hamud bin Uqla ash-Shu’aybi just to name a few.
Strangely, this has become a source of bitter disagreement between Muslims the past few years. The side who claims that this isn’t true use Qur’anic verses totally unrelated to the topic of apostasy in Islam and fail to explain authentic ahadith on the subject such as “Whoever changed his Islamic religion, then kill him” [al-Bukhari Vol. 9, Book 84, No. 57]. They also fail to explain the wars of apostasy fought by Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه and the Companions.

See ‘Nullifications of Islam’ by Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and all the different explanations available for that manual such as from Shaykh Abu Basir at-Tartusi.

The question of Democracy is a separate subject and has caused much confusion and misconception in the Islamic world due to its stated objectives. A good rebuttal of this form of rule can be found in the books ‘Democracy: a Religion’ by Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and at-Tibyân Publication’s works and translations on Democracy.

Pre-Islamic Ignorance.

Refer to the works of Imam Ibn Kathir and Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah on the disbelief of ruling by al-Yâsiq and the ruling on judging the people by a combination of borrowed laws in general.


i.e., Masjid al-Haram in Makkah and Masjid an-Nabawi in Madinah.

Al Qaeda leaders and ordinary members here have told me that they all yearn for making pilgrimage to Makkah alongside the rest of the ummah. They always have a good laugh at the desperate lies of the Saudi’s and constantly seek Allah’s refuge from them.

No matter how many times we in al Qaeda may respond to certain accusations that are made against us such as takfîr, khawârij, killing Muslims and so on, these scholars for dollars keep echoing the same rubbish repeatedly without ever giving a proper scholarly reply to our responses.
[12] This may shock many, but many mujahidin who made hijrah from there have attested to it. The brothers make it a point to recite the daily adhkār especially in the morning and evenings for protection from these jinn’s that give away our positions.

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