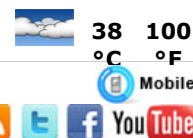


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## Defeating the ideology of terrorism

*S Iftikhar Murshed*  
Sunday, July 03, 2011

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Little Sohana was kidnapped from Peshawar's Hashtnagri vicinity on June 19. She was drugged and a suicide jacket was fastened to her body. The nine-year-old was then taken to Darra Islam in Lower Dir and left near the Frontier Corps check post with instructions to detonate the explosives. Instead, the terrified child ran towards the soldiers and, sobbing uncontrollably, told them about her harrowing ordeal. Sohana thus saved not only her own life but also that of many others. The horrifying incident has already faded from public memory but the ideology that prompted such savagery continues to thrive.

At the international conference in Tehran on the "Global Fight Against Terrorism" President Zardari mumbled: "Pakistan supports the idea of a counter narrative to win the battle for hearts and minds. It is only by defeating terrorists on the ideological front that victory can be achieved." Such words have been heard before but nothing substantial has been done in the three years that the PPP-led government has been in power.

As the president rambled on about the need for the ideological conquest of terrorism, he was not even aware of an unprecedented meeting on June 13 of some 300 prominent ulema (religious scholars) at the Nizamia madressah at Eidak in the Mir Ali district of North Waziristan. The participants risked their lives to unanimously declare all forms of terrorism, and in particular suicide attacks, as anathema to Islamic tenets.

The ulema also decreed that it was forbidden to declare anyone



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a kafir (non-believer) or a munafiq (hypocrite) no matter what his personal beliefs. The ruling is completely in accord with the Quranic passage: "...and do not – out of a desire for the fleeting gains of this worldly life – say unto anyone who offers you the greeting of peace, 'Thou art not a believer.'" This poses a formidable challenge to Al-Qaeda's concept of takfir under which deviants from their literalist interpretation of Islam are considered apostates and therefore worthy of being killed.

If the government is at all serious about defeating the ideology of terrorist violence under the guise of religion then it must first understand and then deconstruct the false narrative on which Al-Qaeda and its affiliates base their so-called jihad. Extremist outfits have perverted the concept of jihad to imply "holy war" – a term which does not exist in Arabic. According to Professor Abdel Haleem of the London University, the word "which is specifically used in the Quran for fighting is qital. Jihad can be by argumentation, financial help or actual fighting."

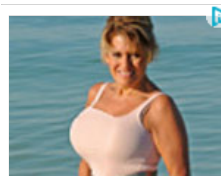
The first Quranic revelation allowing Muslims to fight came in 622 in Medina. However the permission, which had nothing to do with the propagation of the religion, was conditional and was restricted to fighting only in self-defence. This stress against aggression is reiterated in several passages of the Quran. Al-Baydawi, who is considered "the soundest and most authoritative commentator of the Quran," defined aggression as: "initiation of fighting, fighting those with whom a treaty has been concluded, surprising the enemy without first inviting them to make peace, destroying crops or killing those who should be protected."

The Quran does not allow any deviation from the norm that the only justification for war is to repel actual aggression or to pre-empt an attack. Hostilities must be terminated should the aggressor subsequently incline towards peace. Fighting in self-defence is further restricted to "those who fight against you" i.e., only combatants are to be fought and civilians must not be subjected to any form of violence. Furthermore, the damage inflicted on the aggressors must never be excessive and always proportional to the harm they have caused. There cannot be a stronger condemnation of terrorist violence and, in the contemporary context, also the use of weapons of mass destruction.

Despite the emphatic renunciation of violence and aggression by the Quran, Al-Qaeda and its associates have managed to construct a narrative based on the fanciful doctrine of abrogation advanced by a few Muslim theologians. The concept relies on two or three Quranic passages particularly verse 106 of Surah Al-Baqara which states: "Any message which We annul or consign to oblivion We replace it with a better or a similar one..." The word "message" (ayah) in this formulation relates to the earlier scriptures and this is obvious from the preceding verse which declares that the Jews and the Christians will never accept any scripture subsequent to their own. All that is stated here is that the Quran has superseded the Bible.

However, "ayah" is also used in a more restricted sense to denote any of the verses of the Quran because they unfailingly contain a message and this is the basis of the doctrine of abrogation. It assumes that some of the earlier verses of the Quran were cancelled by subsequent ones during the 23 years that the process of revelation lasted. The ridiculous implication is that God made His commandments known but then had second thoughts and amended His earlier pronouncements. Some of the greatest Muslim theologians notably Abu Muslim al-Isfahani cite the Quranic passage "There is nothing that could alter His words..." to reject the doctrine of abrogation.

It is this absurd doctrine on which the ideology of terrorism in the name of Islam is largely based. The passages of the Quran forbidding aggression and violence are assumed to have been annulled by later verses pertaining to fighting. These are taken out of context to justify indiscriminate slaughter and suicide bombings in violation of the indispensable principle of Quran-interpretation that its verses cannot be isolated and have to be interpreted against the entire corpus of revelations pertaining to a particular subject.



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The intellectual incapacity or, even worse, unwillingness of the government to expose the deceitful narrative that underpins extremist violence has enabled groups such as the Hizb ut-Tahrir to influence powerful elements of Pakistani society. Though some analysts believe that the Hizb ut-Tahrir is not a terrorist outfit, its agenda is no less deadly. It is built around the military overthrow of governments in Muslim majority countries in order to enforce its own interpretation of Islam. Its approach is gradual and is based upon the contamination of influential segments of society, particularly in the military, with its perverse ideology.

One of its internal documents cited by Maajid Nawaz, a member of the Hizb ut-Tahrir till May 2007 and currently director at the London-based counterterrorism think tank Quilliam Foundation, states that the first step is the indoctrination of those in authority and "after this the military would be capable of establishing the authority of Islam. Hence a coup d'état would be the manifestation of a political change..." Against this background the recent detention of Brig Ali Khan and the interrogation of other army officers for their alleged involvement with the Hizb ut-Tahrir become alarming.

Hizb ut-Tahrir operatives are highly educated and are committed to waging "an intellectual warfare of ideas and narratives" aimed at establishing an Islamic caliphate. Thus Maajid Nawaz, who was educated at London University's School of Oriental Studies and at the London School of Economics recalls that the Musharraf regime also arrested Hizb ut-Tahrir sympathisers in 2003 and then confesses: "Regrettably, I had helped recruit some of these officers while they were studying at the famous Sandhurst military academy in the UK."

Al-Qaeda and outfits such as the Hizb ut-Tahrir strive to monopolise the interpretation of Islam and build an ideology based on the distortion of its tenets. This can only be defeated by the actual message of the Quran. The nineteenth century reformer, Jamal-ad-Din Afghani understood this only too well when he wrote: "Every Muslim is sick, and the only remedy is the Quran."

The writer is the publisher of Criterion quarterly. Email: iftimurshed@gmail.com

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First dissociate from the Kashmir issue as jugular vein of Pakistan. Additionally the Mullahs must be dissociated in interfering with state policy of Pakistan. Otherwise the scourge of terrorism will eat into the civil population of Pakistan

#### Atis

India

The kuran contains too many contradictions to be a book from god. The unending confusions and conflicts among muslims, even muslim scholars, prove this. The muslims should look to better and modern books for guidance. Otherwise they will only be a nuisance.

#### M. Shahid

Belgium

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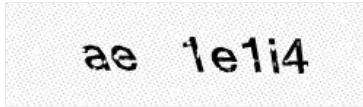
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