

CONCEPTS OF FUNDAMENTALISM AND JIHAD IN ISLAM: AN ANALYSIS OF APPROACHES AND PERSPECTIVES

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To‘xtanazarov Abduvahob

Researcher,

International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan

Email: stounblack832@gmail.com

Tel.: +998 91 114 20 94

*Scientific Supervisor: **Nigora Yusupova***

Doctor of Law, Professor

Abstract

Modern religious fanaticism is one of the global threats to civilization. The article reveals the civilizational characteristics of Islamic fanaticism and examines the difference between religious fanaticism and other types of this phenomenon. Also, different opinions about the concept of dogma are analyzed and based on the evidence of Hanafi scholars.

Key words

Religion, Islam, bigotry, bigotry, Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, Sheikh Ramazan Buti, Sagadayev, ignorance, analysis, reasons, jihad, fanaticism, ideology, "Al-Fath", Muslim, mushrik, kafir, apostate.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of "Islamic fundamentalism" has been actively discussed in local and foreign scholarly and academic-publicistic literature over recent decades. Despite the numerous studies that differ in quality and methodological approach, there remains a need for a fundamentally different understanding not only of the concept referred to as "Islamic fundamentalism" in various contexts, but also of the approaches used to study it. Understanding the concept of Islam and its civilizational specificity, as well as determining how it differs from other forms of religious fundamentalism, remains one of the pressing issues of our time.

At the 72nd session of the United Nations Security Council, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev stated: "We highly value our sacred religion as the embodiment of our ancient values. We firmly condemn those who equate our sacred religion with violence and bloodshed, and we can never compromise with them. Islam calls us to goodness and peace and urges us to preserve and cherish genuine human virtues" [1.2].

When examining the concept of Islamic fundamentalism, it would be incorrect to limit the analysis and conclusions merely to such issues as “Islamic terrorism,” the “Islamic threat,” “multilevel instability,” and similar phenomena.

In this regard, let us analyze the views of several scholars concerning this concept. One of the Russian researchers, A. Sagadeev, writes: “Islam is a fundamentalist religion, while fundamentalism is a consequence of intolerance inherent in the entire Islamic religion.... For some Europeans, Muslims are still fanatics who are supposedly ready to kill anyone who does not accept their beliefs” [5.18.]. Naturally, no Muslim scholar would agree with such a view.

A semantic connection between Islamic fundamentalism, fundamentalism, extremism, radicalism, and terrorism is continuously imposed upon people, and these phenomena are consequently also perceived as Islamic phenomena. It has become relatively widespread to characterize Islamic fanaticism in terms of political Islam, fundamentalism, and extremism. All of these arise as a consequence of fanatical attitudes. The concept of fanaticism in Islam may likewise be studied directly in connection with the concept of fundamentalism.

The harm caused by fanaticism to the individual and society is considerable. A fanatic is an angry, agitated, nervous, emotionally driven individual who experiences intense negative emotions. Such a person is among the active carriers and propagators of destructive ideas. It is precisely these characteristics that enable such an individual to win the hearts and minds of supporters among the wider public.

A fanatic is unable to perceive reality as it actually is. This is because he sees only what he is predisposed to see. Even when the truth is undeniably apparent, he is unable to recognize the reality perceived by others. Because a fanatic considers himself to be right and others to be wrong, he constantly, though often unconsciously, severs social ties and widens the gulf of conflict. According to his narrow worldview, everyone must live according to his own prescribed model; otherwise, they are considered “misguided” [15.3.].

MAIN PART

The Hanafi school is widespread in our country, and our jurists have predominantly conducted their scholarly activities within the framework of this school. It would not be an exaggeration to state that many of the most prominent scholars of the Hanafi school emerged precisely from the territory of Transoxiana. However, over time, the Muslims of our land experienced various historical circumstances and ultimately came under Russian colonial rule. Especially during the Soviet period, society became increasingly distanced from religion and Islam, resulting in a period during which the development of Islamic knowledge and

enlightenment came to a halt. In the words of Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf: "...jurists and books of Islamic jurisprudence were destroyed. People eventually became unable even to read the books that remained. When the process of returning to religion began, it was limited to translating small books concerning prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage from the Arabic script into the Cyrillic script" [2.64.]. As a result, our people faced backwardness and weakness, as well as a lack of understanding of religion and even atheism [3.10.].

A profound understanding of the specific characteristics of religion is required in order to study and analyze these issues comprehensively. It is necessary to take a closer look at fundamentalist ideology, particularly the concept of fundamentalism within Islam. It can be argued that any religious ideology containing elements of anti-humanism simultaneously incorporates destructive ideas characteristic of fundamentalism, although these ideas do not always develop fully. For such an ideology to transform into a fundamentalist religious ideology, emphasis must be placed on these ideas, they must be cultivated by specialized ideologues, and the mass consciousness of believers must be prepared to perceive them. An important condition for such preparation is an extraordinary historical situation that threatens the believer's life and leaves no harmless way out.

A closer examination of religious fundamentalism allows us to identify the following characteristic features: extreme intolerance toward dissenting opinions and toward people of different faiths, particularly those who do not believe in religion; promotion of one's own exceptionalism and superiority over others; clearly defined group boundaries, a sense of being chosen among members of the fundamentalist religious community, and a perception of oneself as an elite; the presence of charismatic authoritarian leaders; instructions and strict requirements governing the behavior of members of the fundamentalist community; a clear distinction between good and evil, as well as the interpretation of all events through the dichotomy between God and Satan, light and darkness; the demonization of opponents and the creation of an aggressive image in order to shape public opinion; xenophobia and fear of everything perceived as foreign; selective attitudes among fanatics toward their own traditions and modernity, determining what should be accepted and what should be rejected; and anxiety over the decline of religion in society and the loss of the place that religion considers appropriate and necessary for itself.

In general, fundamentalist religious ideology is a distorted, fantastical program for resolving the acute conflict between the interests of a particular religious group and those of its social opponents; it is an inadequate form of

resolving the historically and socially intolerable situation of a particular group of believers.

When studying Islamic fundamentalism, it is necessary to understand the fundamental difference between such Islamic concepts as *taqwa* and fundamentalism. It is also important to examine the historical roots of Islamic fundamentalism and determine the place of fundamentalist tendencies within the system of Islamic civilization. In the scholarly analysis of Islamic fundamentalism, it is essential to distinguish between the concepts of "Islam" and "fanaticism." We cannot agree with the statement of the Russian scholar M. Yakhyayev: "Every Muslim is a fundamentalist, but not every fundamentalist is a Muslim" [6.34.]. One of the most important distinctive characteristics of Islamic fundamentalism is the tendency to monopolize truth, which is clearly manifested in the idea of "declaring others unbelievers and withdrawing from the world" (*at-takfir wa-l-hijra*) [17.8.]. Islamic fundamentalism is based on a belief in the truth of an authentic Islam and is often interpreted as an idea of restoring the original Islam through an appeal to historical experience. The restoration of the Islamic heritage is interpreted as the restoration of early Islamic social institutions and the socio-legal norms associated with them. The selective renewal of Sharia norms essentially leads to the formation of a particular "Sharia myth" that does not fully correspond to the authentic historical body of Islamic norms.

However, upon deeper examination, religious fundamentalists construct a new mythological reality based on the binary opposition of "us versus them," brought to its logical extreme. A world immersed in metaphysical ignorance (*jahiliyyah*) assumes a closed character. It places the "saved sect" (*firqa najiyya*), which is endowed with the mission of disseminating the most adequate understanding of Sharia and the true divine order, in opposition to all humanity [8.25.].

Another characteristic feature of Islamic religious fundamentalism is its transnational nature. In this regard, the following considerations should be taken into account.

First, the origins of some extremist organizations cannot initially be directly associated with religious fundamentalism. For example, jihadism developed at a later stage, after religion had entered local civil societies. The situations in Palestine and Chechnya can serve as examples. In Chechnya, the war for "national liberation" (naturally, from the perspective of its sponsors) gradually transformed into a specific form of jihad. Similarly, in the second case, in Palestine, this process was carried out by structures associated with religious fundamentalism, which generally encouraged secular groups such as "Al-Fatah" to form alliances with

groups previously regarded as opposition forces and to reinforce their agendas with religious content.

Second, the transition into the fundamentalist sphere led to the use of the concept of martyrdom in terrorism, namely the expansion of suicide-attack methods. This made such actions not only “highly advantageous” for organizers in terms of costs and destruction, but also more difficult to counter. This occurred because the perpetrator’s own life was not regarded as valuable.

Third, appealing to religious motivations enabled organizations that had previously been associated with particular territories and political, often “nationalist,” objectives to establish links with transnational terrorist networks and groups that increasingly directed their activities toward global struggles [6.65.].

After losing its territorial status, the third characteristic of Islamic fundamentalism and its transnational nature is associated with the “statelessness” of this phenomenon. In essence, there are no states that directly advocate fundamentalist religious ideology and practice. As the tragic example of the war against Iraq demonstrated, the overthrow of such a regime does not eliminate the threat of fundamentalism and terrorism; rather, it can create favorable conditions for fundamentalism [17.4.]. There is no doubt that many states behave in ways that are undesirable from the perspective of the international community. Some secretly conduct research into nuclear weapons, threaten neighboring states, fail to respect human rights, and support and finance terrorist structures. Nevertheless, none of these states can be regarded as the leader of the fundamentalist movement.

Some scholars derive the essence of *jihad* from an analysis of its social functions, including its moral and psychological function: “stimulating the religious and political activity of Muslims, encouraging and involving them in acts of violence, and sustaining their religious zeal and capacity, even using them as a source that may lead to fanaticism” [8.191].

Because of the highly specific understanding of *jihad* among the earliest Muslims, it was initially directed against the Arab polytheists, and later against “hypocrites” and apostates. As the Arab Caliphate was established and expanded, efforts to spread Islam to other peoples and states were already underway and, “under certain historical circumstances, acquired particular significance in the Islamic world as the fulfillment of the sacred duty of Muslims” [9.87.].

The subsequent evolution of the concept of *jihad* occurred during the consolidation of the Muslim state and the incorporation of regions, cultures, and peoples with different statuses into it. It became necessary to develop principles of domestic and foreign policy and to establish relations with other states, peoples, cultures, and religions. “The doctrine of *jihad* was supplemented by interpretations

of concepts such as *dar al-Islam* — the abode of Islam, the territory under the complete rule of Muslims; *dar al-harb* — the abode of war; and *dar as-sulh* — the abode of treaty, as well as the possessions of other religions, where Muslims did not exercise political authority but enjoyed religious freedom” [5.19.]. As a result of this evolution of the concept of jihad, the targets of armed action came to include polytheists, those persecuting Muslims, those who invaded the “territory of Islam,” oppressors, apostates, bandits, non-Muslim monotheists, and those who refused to pay *jizya*.

The Qur’anic verses concerning jihad are highly controversial, allowing theologians to interpret them from the perspective of their own historical period and interests. The emergence of contradictory instructions concerning jihad in authoritative sources is explained by changes in the historical circumstances of the Muslim community and the life of Muhammad (peace be upon him). This provides virtually unlimited possibilities for different interpretations of jihad. For example, the Qur’an identifies certain distinctions among followers of different religions.

In subsequent periods, Islamic scholars distinguished between lesser jihad and greater jihad, emphasizing the different attitudes of Muslims toward adherents of non-Muslim religions. Nevertheless, increasingly radical and contradictory meanings began to be attributed to the concept of “jihad”: the struggle for harvest, the struggle against illiteracy, the struggle of the new against the old, class struggle, and others. Authentic religious interpretations gradually began to play a less significant role in the concept of “jihad.” As A. Sagadeev wrote, even “the jihad of the sword” became an abstract slogan and was implemented only when it corresponded to the secular interests of Muslim leaders [5.20.].

As a result of the above, it can be stated that it was only in the second year after the Hijra that Almighty Allah granted Muslims permission to take up arms in order to defend themselves. Today, it is necessary to carefully consider whether the use of weapons would benefit Muslims. Before undertaking any action, the question should be raised as to whether it will benefit the Muslim community or not. The renowned Syrian scholar Muhammad Sa’id Ramadan al-Buti wrote a book on jihad and advanced the view that “the words and actions of those who today call for jihad are far removed from genuine jihad” [14.7.]. He strongly criticized those who disseminated false claims about jihad and hijra on the Internet. In his book *Al-Jihad fi al-Islam*, written in opposition to those who claim that the use of force constitutes “jihad,” Muhammad Sa’id Ramadan al-Buti wrote: “I observe that in the eyes of certain circles, a new Islam is emerging in this century. It has not descended as revelation from Allah. Rather, it arises from the ideas and dispositions of certain people. Its rulings are not united with the rulings established

by Sharia evidence and do not submit to their authority. They arise only from the prejudices of certain individuals and groups or from the dominance of passions and desires. What the Islamic world is witnessing today is the result of the continuous activities of the advocates of this new Islam. We had not known it before. They seek to replace the Islam that we have always known to have come to us through revelation from Allah with their own version of Islam. The Islam we know consists of following what is required by the guidance of the Messenger of Allah, definitive Sharia evidence, established principles of Islamic jurisprudence, and the *ijtihad* of the majority of early scholars, whose knowledge and precision of understanding have been attested to by generations of Muslims" [3.267].

According to the claims of the "messengers" of this new Islam emphasized by Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti, their doctrine allegedly represents the jurisprudence of the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the pious predecessors. At the same time, however, they claim that strangling innocent Muslims at night is an act permitted by Sharia. They claim that killing Muslim girls against whom no wrongdoing has been established is an act permitted by Sharia. They claim that executing the director of a religious sciences institute in Batna, despite his complete innocence, is an act permitted by Sharia. They even claim that blowing up an ordinary passenger aircraft together with innocent people aboard constitutes an act sanctioned by Sharia [16.4].

In this regard, various fundamentalist individuals and fundamentalist Islamic organizations have adopted these particular interpretations of jihad. They correspond closely to their specific interests and fundamentalist objectives. This, in turn, has provided the basis for some Western scholars to interpret Islam as a "religion of fire and the sword," while portraying jihad as a desire for plunder, taking captives, killing enemies, and as an aggressive instrument [15.193].

Islamic fanatics interpret jihad as a call to armed struggle and regard it as the sixth "pillar" of faith. "Jihad is a Muslim's daily obligation, just like the daily prayer and fasting. Whoever abandons it becomes a sinner," states one of the influential theorists and practitioners of radical Islam in the Islamic world [11.101]. According to another group of Western Islamic scholars, "jihad is a concept for the religious and ideological justification of social violence in Islam; from its own perspective, it explains social conflicts and shapes ideological and socio-psychological attitudes among Muslim believers that are beneficial to the ruling elite" [10.191]. It should also be emphasized that, unlike fundamentalist fanatics, many contemporary traditionalists and, particularly, Islamic reformers oppose the use of the concept of "jihad" to ideologically justify violence and destructive activities. One such author, Harun Yahya, writes: "Using the concept of 'jihad' in

relation to anything as a description of forms of violence directed against innocent people, namely terrorism, is the greatest injustice and distortion of the truth" [12.36].

Islamic reformers, proceeding from the premise that religious tolerance is a fundamental principle of Islam, emphasize the need for "intellectual jihad": "Such an approach should aim at adapting the rules of the past in accordance with new rules. It is necessary to transform the contemporary situation and bring it into conformity with these general principles and values" [13.7.]. Using Islamic enlightenment and knowledge for various ulterior purposes and presenting them to the global public as something negative is merely an example of a certain pseudo-Salafism and excessive fanaticism.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be stated that contemporary fundamentalist Islamic ideological doctrines, in general, remain on the margins of the main trajectory of the development of Islamic civilization. This is also confirmed by the fact that during periods when fundamentalist religious and political movements became active in the Islamic world, Islam itself, in the form in which it existed, did not obstruct political modernization. One of the principal vectors of this modernization was the search for ways to synthesize global political and social ideas with the system of traditional Islamic values. At the same time, beginning in the 1970s, radical religious and political movements based on the fundamentalist concept of declaring others unbelievers and "withdrawing from the world" (*at-takfir wa-l-hijra*) became increasingly powerful.

As a result of our analysis, we identified intolerance, the perception of oneself as a chosen elite, clearly delineated group boundaries, the presence of authoritarian leaders, strict requirements, demonization, and xenophobia as characteristic features of fundamentalists. In this regard, we have reached several conclusions demonstrating that such fundamentalist movements represent misguided directions. **First**, enemies of religion spend considerable financial resources on training their followers in militancy, providing them with weapons, and attempting to implement destructive plans that cause harm to humanity.

Second, the spreading of sedition, corruption, and slander, which they employ, is also regarded as among the major sins in Islam.

Third, Islam does not endorse forcing people to convert to religion or humiliating others.

Fourth, although a Muslim submits to Allah in religious matters and acts of worship, in worldly affairs he may establish and follow rules and regulations based

on the requirements of time and circumstances, provided that they do not contradict Sharia.

On the basis of the foregoing, we may conclude that in confronting various fundamentalist movements and groups that use religion as a guise, and in educating young people and society as a whole in the spirit of the enlightened principles of Islam, humanism, and loyalty to the homeland, it is necessary to counter them through the genuine remedy of Islam – enlightenment and solidarity. In this regard, the reforms currently being implemented in our country provide broad opportunities for achieving this objective.

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