



Holy War on Islam, Christianity and Judaism

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ABSTRACT

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The concept of holy war, often exclusively associated with Islamic Jihad, prompts misconceptions and misinterpretations. This study aims to elucidate the nuanced nature of holy war by examining its teachings within Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Contrary to prevalent assumptions linking holy war solely with terrorism and the unjust spilling of innocent blood, this research seeks to explore whether these teachings inherently endorse violence or if they serve broader objectives encompassing politics, economics, or power dynamics. By analyzing historical and contemporary perspectives, this paper endeavors to illuminate the multifaceted motivations and interpretations behind holy wars across these faiths. Through this exploration, a deeper comprehension of the complexities underlying these doctrines emerges, challenging traditional assumptions and fostering a more comprehensive understanding of holy war beyond its conventional associations.

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Introduction

Attention to Islamic Jihad has emerged in the headlines of European and American mass media since the World Trade Center incident in the United States on September 11 2001 and then continued with the emergence of the Islamic State version of ISIS. The news became even more exciting with reports of the secret recruitment of foreign jihadists from Europe and North America to join ISIS, which ultimately spread fear about acts of terrorism that these young people were suspected of committing upon their return to their respective countries. In April 2014, the British parliament reported a counterterrorism approach to anticipate British Muslims fighting in Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia, namely a law that criminalizes British citizens serving in the armed forces of other countries. Media attention

to Islamic jihad has attracted public attention regarding the comparison of similar jihadists among Christians and Jews. These three monotheistic religions have a common origin as religions that developed from the Middle East (Nader, 2015).

The Arabic word “Jihad” is translated as holy war, is associated with Islam and is commonly used and misused in European–American society in recent times. Meanwhile, the Crusades are associated with Christianity and stories of the past. Regarding Judaism, there is no Hebrew term referring to holy war, however religious war is related to all three religions without reference to a specific word reference. What the world experienced in the last half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century was a religious war that had a secular image for Christians and Jews, but had a Jihad or holy war image for Muslims. Anthropologists use critical comparisons to reveal contemporary events from the perspective of politicians, political experts, journalists and orientalists because this term (holy war) is very important for today's world. It is very important because it causes mass murder and various destruction (Nader, 2015).

The study of conflict has received high attention from multicultural societies globally (Rahman, 2016). Because the thesis about religious conflict is unavoidable, especially since Islam is one of the main topics involved (Rahman, 2015). In the critical paradigm of Islamic education, religions actually carry a mission of peace (Rahman, 2015; Riyadi et. al, 2022), so that the peace education model becomes a new direction for education, especially in Indonesia as it enters the late 20th century (Rahman, 2017; Kharisma et. al, 2021).

Method

The research methodology for a literature-based study examining holy wars within Islamic, Christian, and Jewish contexts involves a comprehensive exploration of scholarly sources, religious texts, historical records, and contemporary analyses. The approach focuses on a thorough review and critical analysis of existing literature to understand the teachings, interpretations, and historical contexts surrounding holy wars in these religions.

Firstly, the methodology entails an extensive review of primary religious texts such as the Quran, the Bible, and the Torah, alongside supplementary religious texts, commentaries, and theological analyses. This comprehensive examination allows for a deep understanding of the foundational teachings related to holy wars within each faith tradition. Comparative analysis between these texts facilitates the identification of

similarities, differences, and nuanced interpretations regarding the concept of holy war across Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

Secondly, the study involves a systematic review of scholarly articles, books, academic journals, and historical records that discuss and analyze holy wars within the specified religious contexts. This step allows for the synthesis of diverse perspectives, historical events, theological debates, and contemporary interpretations surrounding the concept of holy war. By analyzing various viewpoints and scholarly arguments, the research aims to discern the evolution, interpretations, and implications of holy wars in the contemporary era.

Result and Discussion

1. Meaning of Holy War

Johnson (2003) revealed the similarities in the meaning of holy war for the 3 monotheistic religions, namely Islam, Christianity and Judaism, where Islam represents the Islamic tradition, while Christianity and Judaism represent the Western tradition. The following are ten meanings related to the concept of holy war in Islamic and Western traditions: (Johnson, 2002)

- 1) Holy war is a war carried out because of God's command. This concept is the meaning of the initial idea of holy war in ancient Israel, as described by Von Rad, this meaning is also primarily intended by the idea of holy war from the English Puritans. In a broad sense, this concept is also central to the Islamic idea of Jihad as a response to God's command for all humans to submit to Him. However, this response does not require a specific call to take up arms but implies a command to try to believe (Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Mungkar: carry out His commands and stay away from His prohibitions).
- 2) Holy war is a war carried out in the name of God by his authorized representatives. The meaning of this concept is at the heart of the Pope's authorization of the crusades. This concept is also at the heart of the authorization of jihad, in a specifically military sense, by religious leaders and politicians united in Islamic countries according to the Sunni tradition, and in the Shia tradition by an imam in hiding or by his special representative.
- 3) Holy war is a war waged by God himself. This concept is the idea of holy war given by Old Testament writers, such as Isaiah and with an eschatological meaning, by the

Prophets of the 8th century BC. The idea of God being actively present in battle, not as a fighter per se, but as a being who is personally present and assisting with His power, is often found in the Hebraic and Christian traditions. This idea does not factor into the Islamic understanding of war because in Islam, believing Muslims fight on behalf of God's dominion on earth, but God is not involved in war.

- 4) Holy War is a war waged to defend religion against its enemies, inside and outside. This concept of defensive holy war is very pervasive in Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions. In Islam, this concept is a major component of contemporary Muslim thinking about jihad across a broad spectrum.
- 5) Holy war is a war carried out to propagate the true religion or establish a social order that is in line with God's authority. This offensive understanding of holy war is the understanding that most quickly inflames certain interests, but in any case, this understanding is not a concept in contemporary tradition and thought, this understanding is often criticized and also often praised. However, in its various forms, this understanding is an element in the concept of holy war as defined historically in all traditions.
- 6) Holy war is a war carried out to support religious conformity and/or punish deviants. This concept is the meaning of holy war found in Ambrose's suggestion that war might be waged for the purpose of protecting Christian religious orthodoxy, in Augustine's assertion of the use of Roman military force against the Donatists and Heretics, in the Crusades against the Albi-gensians/Cathari and in widely in medieval Europe, and also widely in the war between Protestants and Catholics in the Reformation Era. In Islamic tradition, this is a type of use of force widely discussed by jurists under the category of *ahkam al-bughat*. But the war against apostates can also be termed *jihad*. The point in all these cases is that whether external or internal, the use of military force for religious purposes can be justified to ensure religious conformity and/or punish heretics.
- 7) Holy war is a war in which the war participants themselves are ritually and/or morally "holy". There are three meanings that can explain this concept, although they can overlap and mix with each other. The three meanings are:
 - a. Cultic Purity. This is proven by certain actions by the soldiers individually and collectively and/or acts of blessing by empowered religious leaders.

- b. Moral truth. Such as a commitment to oppose certain activities (e.g. sexual relations) during war, or more generally about the strict implementation of some rules for fighting the enemy.
 - c. Purity or righteousness is being one of those appointed by God.
Example: Medieval Crusaders took religious vows before going to war. The Knights Templar, Knights of Malta, and Hospitallers were sent specifically to fight against the enemies of Christianity and protect the Holy Land.
- 8) Holy War is a militant struggle for belief using weapons as well as non-violent means. Soldiers of Christ were individuals who fought against sin through their own beliefs and behavior, then expanded into actual military action against the enemies of the church. In Islam, the fundamental meaning of Jihad as “effort in the path of Allah” has been understood as something that includes personal struggle for the faith as well as military action against infidels. In this concept the clear priority is on inner transformation. Later traditions express this priority as not just two (faith and military) but four different types of Jihad, namely jihad of the heart (faith), Jihad of the tongue (speech), jihad of the hand (good deeds), and jihad of the sword (holy war).
- 9) Holy war is a war under a religious (charismatic) leader. This concept is similar to the second meaning of holy war, namely war that is authorized by representatives appointed by God. However, the first idea is related to the cultic status of people who gain power (for example: the priests of the Israeli Confederation, the Pope, the highest Imam of Dar Al-Islam), while the concept of this idea refers to something different, namely the character of a leader who is more personal than cult. He can lead in the name of God because of God's inspiration or special personal beliefs. In Islam, there is the term Mahdism, namely the belief in a religious leader as the Mahdi, “the one who is guided”, who is expected to appear shortly before the end of time, and who will act to end corruption and oppression and restore justice on earth.
- 10) Holy war as a phenomenon was recognized during or after the fact as an “absolute miracle.” Holy wars are sometimes recognized after the fact, with the outcome unknown before or during the armed conflict. When a war's outcome is unexpectedly positive, the anticipated catastrophe does not occur, and the results are interpreted as a miracle, and the war leader gains new prestige, then this war is considered a holy war because a phenomenon occurred. Example: Saddam Hussein who claimed Iraq's victory in the Gulf War.

2. Holy War in Islam

Historian Albert Hourani in his book *A History of the Arab Peoples* (1991) separated the concept of "Jihad" from the five pillars of Islam. Jihad or war against those who threaten society, is considered an obligation. Hourani notes that after the spread of Islam and with the onset of counteroffensive from Western Europe, Jihad was seen more as defense than expansion, and was perceived as a "spiritual struggle" (Rozehnal, 2008).

However, the general public, especially Western society, interprets the social, ethical and political values in Islam with the connotation that Islam legitimizes war and violence, so that Islam does not have an ethic of peace and non-violence. An extreme view in this regard was expressed by Robert Payne who wrote: "The brutal spirit of war is much repeated in the Qur'an and there is no doubt that he (Muhammad) meant exactly what he said. He sanctified the sword by precept and example." (Singh, 2003)

Is that really what happened that Muhammad preached violence for the sake of religion? There needs to be clarification that contains a correct understanding that the Al Qur'an permits carrying out war because of Allah. The Qur'an says: "Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits, for indeed Allah does not like those who transgress limits." (QS 2: Al Baqarah: 190). This means that what Islam permits is defensive war, not offensive war.

Meanwhile, holy war, as written in the meaning of holy war no. 5, namely "holy war as war carried out to propagate the true religion or establish a social order that is in line with God's authority" is not justified in Islam. Wars that are justified in the Qur'an are always for the sake of Allah, while wars to spread Islam, aggressive wars, are absolutely prohibited. As stated in the Qur'an Surah Al Baqarah verse 256: "There is no compulsion in (adhering to) religion (Islam), in fact there is a clear (difference) between the right path and the wrong path. Whoever disbelieves in Thagut and believes in Allah, then indeed, he has held on (firmly) to a very strong rope that will not break. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." This means that Allah has given humans choices because everything is clear, and Muslims in preaching must convey it without having to force them to convert to Islamic teachings.

Indeed, there are several references in the Qur'an that justify "the prohibition of turning away from infidels who are gathered in enemy ranks, but at the same time the Qur'an also says: "If they incline towards peace, then incline towards it. and fear Allah." (QS

Al Anfal: 61). This is proof that although the Qur'an emphasizes the ethics of love, compassion, religious coexistence and so on, it also permits war because of threats to the Islamic faith. So it can be concluded that the basic aim of Islamic defensive wars for Allah is to restore peace and freedom of religion and worship. War because of truth is one of the highest forms of charity, including fardluan (Singh, 2003).

3. Holy War in Christianity

For Christians, the word crusade or "Crusade" is used instead of the word "Jihad". The Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion defines the Crusades as military expeditions of Christian forces in the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries whose aim was to expel Muslims from the Holy Land. In today's Anglo-American West, the word is used by evangelical Christians who operate with religious fervor (Leeming, 2010). On September 17, 2001, then-President of the United States George W. Bush used the word "Crusade" to fight terrorism to raise fears, where such language could trigger hatred and distrust between Christians and Muslims. A French Foreign Minister said: This is a terrible trap, one must avoid falling into it. The Grand Mufti of the Mosque in Marseille, France, said this kind of language was reminiscent of the barbaric and unjust military operations against the Muslim world by Christian Knights several hundred years ago.

Others argue that black and white language like that used by President George W. Bush endangers America. At that time the Taliban warned Afghans to prepare for Jihad against America if US troops attacked Afghanistan. A former leader of Christian Fundamentalists in the United States, Colonel V. Doner wrote a book on Christian Jihad, *Christian Jihad: Neo Fundamentalists and the Polarization of America*, in which he outlined the jihadist mindset and the Armageddon culture war. He believes that it is better for religions to respect each other rather than demonize each other and conflict (Marshall, 2014).

Secularists then rushed to remove the word "Crusade" from its use in the politics of the Iraq war. However, every country in the Middle East that has been attacked by the United States since 9/11 still believes that its sovereignty has been violated. Western colonialists may have reassured themselves by not using the word "Crusade," but those attacked by Euro-Americans feared that the spectacle of Crusades and colonial history would repeat itself.

Even though we no longer hear the word crusade often, in Christian circles there is a definition of holy war that is widely known and often spoken, as characterized by Bainton (in Johnson, 2002), namely: The crusade idea requires that the cause of the war must be holy (and there is no cause holier than religion), that the war will be fought for God's sake and with his help, that the crusaders are pious and their enemies ungodly, that the war will be waged without mercy (Johnson, 2002).

4. Holy War in Judaism

For Judaism there is no single term for holy war / Jihad, so there is not a single media that mentions the term holy war in the formation of the new state of Israel. Jewish attention is drawn to young Muslims from Europe and America who join ISIS. Meanwhile, Europeans and Americans have long joined the Israeli army before the formation of the state of Israel. The Zionist movement has recruited thousands of military men and women. The process was called "Mahal", where volunteers from abroad took part in Zionist military operations during the British occupation of Palestine. In the 1948 war, according to estimates, there were around 4,000 World War II veterans from Europe, the United States and Canada who joined military operations against Palestine. They used their experiences during World War II to help the Zionists (Davis, 1994).

"Expensive" recruitment continues to this day. Thousands of volunteers from dozens of countries are currently leaving for Israel to join Israeli Military combat units. The online recruitment (via internet network) program "Mahal" states that the aim of this program is to strengthen frontline combat units consisting of non-Israeli citizens of Jewish descent with a service period of 18 months. It is estimated that today around 100 British citizens serve in Israel, where they are supported by British mothers who are proud of their children serving in the Israeli military. However, in April 2014 the UK issued a report on counterterrorism which also applies to British citizens who are members of the Israeli military, where British citizens may not join other countries' military forces. So far, "Mahal" volunteers have been part of the destruction of Gaza which led to the deaths of so many innocent Palestinian civilians. However, this recruitment policy reaches all over the world, covering at least 5000 immigrants. These immigrants receive special financial assistance to live in Israel or to visit family in their respective countries.

Western media did not report much about this recruitment. Nader (2015) said that the Zionist project recruited young people and gave them fantasies about Israel, where they

also received instruction about Zionism and the Israeli military. According to some studies, in this project visitors learn to hate the enemy, namely the Palestinians, and accept Israel and their duty to defend it. So far media selectivity seems blind, turning a blind eye to Western recruitment for Israel. This sparked the idea of Islamic Jihad as a defense against Jewish jihad which continued with expansion into the occupied Palestinian territories, and in military assets in other Arab countries (Nader, 2015).

Responding to statements by Jews who said they had abandoned Jewish Jihad, a media specialist in the area, Michael Brown, noted that the difference between Jewish Jihad and Islamic Jihad is that only in Islam is Jihad a valid expression of faith. Brown (2014) highlights the actions of religious Jews, especially Ultra-Orthodox Rabbis who justify killing children in the name of Jewish Law. Brown concludes that the difference between Judaism and Orthodoxy as well as Orthodoxy in Islam is that in Judaism expressions of murder are rarely exceptions as in Islam.

On the BBC Newsnight TV program, Katya Adler reported "The rise of the Military Rabbis", the existence of Israeli rabbis who suddenly changed the Israeli military from secular to a line of people who believed that Israel's war was "God's War". According to this program, Military Rabbis played an important role during the Israeli invasion of Gaza throughout 2015, and these Military Rabbis sided with Civil Rabbis. Thus, they actually believed that bringing secular wars to holy wars made soldiers better and more moral. This is very dangerous because this "Holy War" has no boundaries, even though it is International Law.

Jewish Rabbis played a central role in formulating Jewish war ideology, as happened in the history of World War 1 in Austria - Hungary. In their speeches, media publications, and religious services, the Rabbis campaigned throughout the monarchy and argued that the war was a Jewish Holy War against the satanic power of Russia. Therefore, involvement in the war was a form of struggle (Rozenblite, 2015).

These Jewish figures and Rabbis are nothing other than teachings that are preserved according to what was conveyed by the Prophet and their books. Prophet Ezekeil said: "Do not be merciful to your spies, do not forgive old people, youth, girls, children and women. Kill them all." The Talmud also says: "It is considered justice if a Jew kills a non-believer with his hands, because bleeding the blood of a non-believer is a form of offering sacrifice to God."(Davis, 1994). Apart from Jewish reformers in the contemporary era who want to

create peace, currently the war in Palestine is still ongoing with forced territorial expansion carried out by the Zionists.

5. Holy War and the Justification of Non-Religious War

War in Islam, as mentioned above, is defensive in nature and aims to restore peace and freedom of religion and worship. Meanwhile, in Christianity and Judaism, although the term holy war is no longer often used in war discourse and has been replaced by the term just war (non-religious war to bring about peace), in practice the form of holy war exists in reality. Walters in his book “The Just War and the Crusade: Antitheses or Analogies?” summarizes the official reasons for the Crusades in direct comparison with the non-religious reasons for just war, as in the following comparison of the reasons for both types of war.

Non-religious just war	Religious just war (holy war)
Defending the homeland	Defend the holy land
Helping allies	Helping the Eastern church
Defending rights	Defending rights
Passing by the innocent	Mission to preach
Defending innocent people	Defending Christian converts
Punish wrongdoing against society	Punish wrongdoing against God/Church.

Table 1. Comparison of the Reasons for Both Types of War

Based on this comparison, it can be seen that the difference between non-religious war and holy war is very subtle because it can only be ascertained from the motive. If all this time what the West has been doing, in this case Christians and Jews, is a just war and not a holy war, then there should be several criteria that must be in place, such as:

1. Comply with international law in waging war
2. Using reasons agreed upon by the international community regarding a discourse of war against a country.
3. Defending rights, apart from respecting and not violating the rights of other nations.
4. The mission to develop religion must be in accordance with agreements with other religions based on the results of fair and equal dialogue.
5. Defending innocent people, in this case there should be no double standards, defending every innocent person regardless of their religion, ethnicity, race, or other interests.
6. Punishing wrongdoing against society must also be done fairly and not set double standards, there is no favoritism in applying punishment.

Thus, the position of war can be said to be a just war and not a religious war if religious sentiments can be avoided. If there are double standards and certain tendencies then it is feared that a religious war or non-religious war is taking place in the guise of holy war.

Conclusion

Is it Really a Holy War or the Politicization of Religion?

What is more difficult is when there is internal fighting between Muslim sects, which is then driven by Western interests. If in European Christianity there were Catholics and Protestants fighting each other, then in Iran and Syria today there is ISIS, a Sunni Islamic group at war with President Bashar Al-Assad and the Shiite-controlled government of Iraq. Ethnic and sectarian cleansing appears to be an internalized norm in both Syria and Iraq. But is this Jihad? For secular Muslims, fighting Assad is an important thing and for people dying against ISIS, their death may be a divine decree and there is a belief in a place in heaven. Meanwhile the sectarian Shiite Militia did not differentiate between ISIS and the rest of the Sunni population, all of them were exterminated. Meanwhile, the United States government wants to destroy the Islamic State together with a coalition of Sunni forces.

In Christianity, the invasion of the Middle East was justified as self-defense in terms of national security after the 9/11 terrorist threat, in addition to other explanations such as the struggle for energy and natural resources. For Judaism, extremism is justified as a response to the Nazi holocaust, various anti-Semitism issues, and the right to return to one's homeland. Ameliorative movements such as Human Rights sometimes become part of the problem when they only look through one prism. Although in fact this "war exhaustion" was also influenced by the production of the international weapons industry by the West.

Whatever the possible solutions to war, it seems that all three monotheistic religions have used the concept of "Holy War", but in different ways. Islamic Jihad shares some contemporary similarities with Judaism, for example: foreign military volunteers in Israel are not criminalized. But there are double standards and serious implications when the West and Israel are considered neo-Crusaders. Israel used the discourse and doctrine of holy war to mobilize human resources in order to expand its colonies and advance its goal of establishing the state of Israel. Meanwhile, the west used the discourse and doctrine of the holy war "Crusade" as a way to conquer Islamic countries and control their resources.

Well, in the end holy war has indeed become a discourse that will never end until the end of time, not only in Islamic Jihad, but also Jewish Jihad and Christian Jihad. If we want to realize world peace as mandated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, then a long dialogue must be voiced tirelessly amidst the explosion of weapons and wars in this contemporary era. It's not a waste of effort even though it's like a drop in the ocean.

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