

JAWDAT SA'ID ON PACIFISM AND VIOLENCE TODAY

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ABSTRACT

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Nonviolence and pacifism are widely recognized and understood by various religions and cultures. Since the 1960s, a particular group of intellectuals, theologians, and religious leaders in the Muslim world have been working to establish a theoretical basis for social justice and a society that embraces diversity. Their efforts primarily focus on minimizing the use of violence. The main objective of this work is to elucidate the philosophical perspective on pacifism in Islam as articulated by the contemporary Islamic scholar Jawdat Sa'id (1931-2022). Sa'id offers an academic viewpoint on the strategic implementation of pacifism to promote social change within the Muslim world and its diplomatic external utilization. His theory is equally applicable to the non-Muslim world, encompassing monotheists and atheists as well. This study examines the texts or written materials, as well as the spoken words and interviews available on Sa'id's personal website and other online platforms related to academia that are widely known and used by the public.

الملخص

الكلمات المفتاحية:

السلمية؛ العنف؛ جودت
سعيد؛ الجهاد.

اللاعنف والسلمية معترف بهما ومفهومان على نطاق واسع في مختلف الأديان والثقافات. ومنذ ستينيات القرن العشرين، تعمل مجموعة معينة من المفكرين وعلماء الدين والزعماء الدينيين في العالم الإسلامي على إرساء أساس نظري للعدالة الاجتماعية ومجتمع يحتضن التنوع. وتركز جهودهم في المقام الأول على التقليل من استخدام العنف. والهدف الرئيسي من هذا العمل هو توضيح المنظور الفلسفي للسلمية في الإسلام كما صاغه الباحث الإسلامي المعاصر جودت سعيد (١٩٣١-٢٠٢٢). يقدم سعيد وجهة نظر أكاديمية حول التطبيق الاستراتيجي للسلمية من أجل تعزيز التغيير الاجتماعي داخل العالم الإسلامي واستخدامها الدبلوماسي خارجياً. وتنطبق نظريته بنفس القدر على العالم غير المسلم، وتشمل الموحدون والملحدون أيضاً. تبحث هذه الدراسة في النصوص أو المواد المكتوبة، وكذلك الكلمات المنطوقة والمقابلات المتاحة على موقع سعيد الشخصي على الإنترنت وغيره من المنصات الإلكترونية الأخرى ذات الصلة بالأوساط الأكاديمية والمعروفة والمستخدمة على نطاق واسع من قبل الجمهور.

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INTRODUCTION

Deraa, Syria, a town with about 200,000 inhabitants, made its first appearance on the world map thanks to its nonviolent activists following the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in March 2011. From the onset, the youth of Deraa took the lead role, organizing the nonviolent protests. Rather than joining the uprising, they scattered rose petals and offered water bottles to the security forces during the local protests, as had previously been done during the civil protests in Syria in 1998. Daraya's activist youth spoke of being influenced by the pacifistic approach of the most prominent figure born in their hometown, Jawdat

Sa'id (Amos, 2012; Kahf, 2011; Lucas, 2018).

Even though the 2011 Syrian uprising did turn into an armed struggle that year, Sa'id continues to condemn violence: 'those who refuse to see still believe in the power of arms. These people believe in the power of arms, not in the power of truth.' (Amos, 2012). Moreover, he had refused to support the Free Syria Army, which had gained popularity in his homeland, and considered it to be an organized gang of violent rebels, former soldiers, and civilians: 'we need to get rid of armies. Soldiers are rifles used by others.' (Amos, 2012).

Jawdat Sa'id is an Islamic scholar born in 1931 to a Circassian family in Deraa, Syria. He graduated from al-Azhar University in Egypt (1946-1958), lived in Saudi Arabia until 1960, and then returned to his homeland. Sa'id has been promoting a doctrine of pacifism since the 1960's. Due to his resistance against Assad's tyrannical regime, Sa'id has been repeatedly arrested. In 2005, he cosigned the renowned Damascus Declaration, in which the Syrian opposition called for the establishment of a democratic regime and the implementation of sociopolitical reforms, including pluralism. According to intellectuals and activists who belong to the Syrian Opposition (*al-Mu'arāḍatu as-Sūrīyah*), those political reforms must be nonviolent: 'peaceful, gradual, founded on accord, and based on dialogue and recognition of the other.' After the bombing of Deraa and the death of Sa'id's brother in 2012, Sa'id left Syria and settled in Turkey (Belhaj, 2017, p. 231; Halverson, 2012, pp. 67-78; Jawdat Said, 2021).

The first and best-known of Jawdat Sa'id's books is *The Doctrine of the First Son of Adam: The Problem of Violence in the Islamic World* (1966), which presents his concept of pacifism in Islam. Sa'id bases his pacifistic philosophy on the 'absolute' pacifistic behavior of Adam's son, Habil (Abel, the younger son), who rejected violence against his older brother, Qabil (Cain). Habil had refused to defend himself and accepted death instead. Nonetheless, Sa'id does not present himself as a pacifist, nor does he refer in his works to Mahatma Gandhi, Lev Tolstoy, or any other non-Muslim intellectuals who viewed nonviolence as a philosophy and strategy for social change. Sa'id claims that Islamic pacifism has not been influenced by Western discourse on nonviolence nor by any non-Muslim philosophers or activists since its seeds already exist in the Qur'an and early Islamic history. As such, Sa'id places himself among Islamic reformers, such as 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (c.1854-c.1902, Syria) and Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938, Pakistan) (Belhaj, 2017: 232; Burrell, 2011: 149-50). In Western society, there is growing interest in Sa'id's pacifistic Islamic approach; he has since published many more works on academic and social media platforms, including his personal website and public profiles on Facebook and YouTube, that have also been translated into English and other languages.

Below, I introduce several studies that analyze Jawdat Sa'id's nonviolence approach. One theologian, Irfan A. Omar, researched the various nonviolent approaches modern Muslim activists took, among them Jawdat Sa'id. Omar writes that Sa'id calls for restricted armed jihad (despite the current level of violence both within and outside the Muslim world), preferring other kinds of jihad: of the pen, of the self, and by reaching out to others utilizing intra- and interfaith dialogues (Omar, 2015: 9- 36).

Halverson also briefly describes Sa'id's nonviolence philosophy in a chapter in his book *Searching for a King: Muslim Nonviolence and the Future of Islam* (2012). Rak (2016: 33-42) discusses Sa'id's nonviolence approach in her article 'Jawdat Sa'id's Thought within the Discourse of Muslim Revival' (2016); she explains that his nonviolence has two aspects: one in the realm of philosophy and the other in practical sociology. Belhaj 'Abdessamad's study *Jawdat Sa'id and the Muslim Philosophy of Peace* (2017) analyzes Sa'id's nonviolence philosophy utilizing an analogy to the ideology of the Egyptian revolutionary and theorist Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966). His main conclusion was that Sa'id's philosophy is based on the Islamic principle of 'Prophetic disobedience', which is compatible with Islam, 'science' (logic), and history.

I sense that Sa'id is more pacifistic in his philosophical view (although he is not an

‘absolute pacifist’) than he is in his presentation as a nonviolent intellectual. He prohibits violence by the state and society until a democratically elected ruler is chosen to rule an ‘ideal state, one in which there is justice, pluralism, equality, and freedom. In the meantime, citizens may express resistance by employing civil disobedience and peaceful protests, as illustrated in 2011 at the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War. The restriction of the use of violence brings us to wonder where and when this type of ‘ideal’ state can exist. As I show below, for Sa’id, ‘the impossible is possible, i.e., he believes that an ‘ideal state will be established sooner or later. However, it will take time for Humanity to realize the compatibility of monotheism, democracy, pluralism, and pacifism. While Sa’id accepts the principle that human beings use violence for self-defense, he continues to advocate for more peaceful methods of conflict resolution. Additionally, he claims: ‘If only Muslims had organized their affairs among themselves based on mutual consultation; accepted opinions based on a consensus; started with whatever agreed upon, and laid aside whatever controversial, they would have solved most of their problems.’ (Sa’id, 1993: 10.)

Several interviews with Sa’id and his speeches, essays, and lectures have been translated into other languages, including English. One noteworthy interview was translated into Russian and published in Islam-portal.ru in February 2011. Initially, this interview took place in April 1998 and was published in an Iranian journal, Current Islamic Issues. That interview presents Sa’id’s pacifistic approach and critique of the correlation between jihad and terrorism today. Instead of violent jihad, Sa’id supports ‘intellectual jihad,’ i.e., the jihad of the pen, both within the Muslim world and outside it. He believes that only explanation and gentle persuasion can beat aggression and violence in the world. (‘America’, 2021).

Several scholars call Sa’id a ‘semi-Qur’anic’ intellectual because he integrates the Qur’anic texts with Islamic history in his philosophy. My understanding is that Sa’id relies mainly on the Qur’an and calls Muslims to reread it more insightfully. The Qur’an calls people to know Allah’s truth and practice it, not because they fear His punishment, but because it is aligned with human reason. Sa’id frequently quotes in his works from Surah al-Baqarah (Q. 2: 30-33). Unfortunately, most Muslims have not recognized Allah’s pacifistic message for hundreds of years due to textual misinterpretations regarding the restricted use of violence in the Qur’an. Moreover, Muslim subjects of tyrannical rulers have preferred to rely on Hadiths to justify any acts of violence (Sa’id, ‘The Conditions for Violence in Islam’, n.d).

Sa’id points out the illegitimacy of those rulers in Muslim states throughout history who instigated the use of violence in the Islamic world, subsequently making violence the only method known to Muslims. In the abovementioned interview, Sa’id tells an anecdote from Ibn Khaldun’s *al-Mukadimah* about a boy who had seen only one animal, a rat, while sitting in jail with his father, an imprisoned Governor’s clerk. One day, the father described a big horse to his son, but after his long description, the boy asked: ‘Doesn’t the horse look like a rat?’ The father sorrowfully said that it does. As such, in Sa’id’s opinion, just like the little boy in that anecdote, Muslims only know how to use familiar violence to solve problems and to rule states, being unable to conceive of anything else (‘America can be Conquered not with Weapons, but with Thoughts’, 2021). Therefore, his main claim is that Muslims do not understand that violence and war are not legitimate today in times of crisis, especially in the Islamic world. Thus, Sa’id preaches pacifism that is based on human harmony and the ethical rejection of violence on the one hand and on faith in Allah on the other.

This study traces Sa’id’s pacifistic approach from a philosophical perspective, as described in his first book and other writings, interviews, and speeches. The critical question is: Is Sa’id’s pacifistic approach compatible with Islam, monotheism, and human reason? In this regard, I make two claims. First, Sa’id’s approach is more inclined toward ‘pacifism’ than ‘nonviolence’. Sa’id considers the markedly limited and infrequent use of

unavoidable violence to be a necessary evil, as in cases of self-defense. Secondly--Sa'id's pacifistic approach is based on monotheism (belief in one God rather than the fear of Him) and human reason. The combination of the intrinsic factors of human emotional and social maturity and the human will to create a prosperous civilization should naturally and rationally guide human progress towards pacifistic norms and, ultimately, to world peace. While this process stems from human instinct and intellect, it contradicts neither monotheism nor Islam because it is an inherent part of God's will.

This article is divided into four chapters. The first chapter outlines the traits of two kinds of society--the 'jungle state' and the 'society of justice,' found in Sa'id's manifesto. When creating such human societies, a 'society of justice' is realizing God's will, resulting from pre-ordained natural human processes and reasonable human choices. The second chapter presents the tight bond between pacifism, monotheism, and human logic in Sa'id's pacifistic approach. The third chapter describes the Prophet Muhammad and the Rashidun as the role model for pacifism in Islam. Finally, chapter four explains the necessity for change in Islam to reinstate intellectual jihad (of the pen or the word), to serve as the primary tool for internal resistance against tyrants instead of all unnecessary violence and terrorism, and towards the resolution of conflicts between Muslim and non-Muslim countries.

DISCUSSION

Two Types of Societies: The "Jungle State" and The "Society of Justice"

Sa'id's manifesto describes two kinds of society (Sa'id, 'The Conditions for Violence in Islam', n.d.; idem., 'Foreword to: No, Jury it is Allah, not the King', n. d.: 32). The first is a primitive society, a 'jungle state', an irrational, unregulated state of human social evolution, ruled by a despot who became the ruler by using violent force and enforces his policies in the same aggressive manner during his reign. This type of social situation contradicts both monotheism and Islam, as well as the natural evolution of Humanity. From Sa'id's perspective, such social development is inappropriate for Muslims and other nations. Sa'id refers to this state as jahiliyyah (ignorance), an inferior social condition that recurs every time Muslims use violence to gain or maintain their political goals. Moreover, Sa'id criticizes violent societies because of the Qur'anic prohibition against the use of violence (Sa'id, 'The Conditions for Violence in Islam', n.d.).

Therefore, Sa'id preaches in favor of normative societies with laws, regulations, and policies that maintain order and peace—better suited to Humanity's wishes and needs: 'there is no law where there is violence, and there is no violence where there is the law.' (Sa'id, 'The Purpose of Law and The Purpose of Religion', n. d.). Society cannot exist peacefully if its citizens are not taught respect and discipline, and justice must be served (Sa'id, 1993, p. 15). The choice to take a peaceful approach, as in a 'society of justice' stems from theological, moral, and logical motives. To believers, whenever justice is achieved, it means that God's will has been realized, though many are not aware of this; to nonbelievers and in secular societies, the attainment of justice is an attestation to the highest level of human nature.

Sa'id prefers a 'society of believers' who can more easily implement justice. Nonetheless, anyone who strives to build a 'society of justice' but chooses to use violence to destroy a 'jungle state' demeans his nation and denigrates his humanity. Sa'id emphasizes that the use of violent jihad within or by a 'society of justice' must be a last resort, sanctioned (under firm restrictions) only if all other nonviolent means have been tried and failed, e.g., to prevent the massacre of Muslims and others or force conversions: 'It is essential to repeat again and again that violence can be used in a society of justice only to stop those who kill people and exile them for their ideas or ethnicities, for it is the obligation of such a society 'regardless of its name or nationality' to install justice among people.' (Sa'id, 'The Conditions for Violence in Islam', n.d.).

In general, Sa'id recommends that Muslims in a 'society of justice' examine each situation and then decide if the use of violence is genuinely justified; force should also be used proportionally, only as much as is necessary to save the specific situation (Sa'id et al.: 36; idem., 1993: 62-63). Hence, only in a highly developed, mature society Muslims may criticize and confront politicians and their policies, as permitted following the Qur'an (Sa'id, 1993, pp. 32-33; Idem., Foreword, n.d.: 22-24). Once human society has reached its behavioral peak, such a critical process will naturally be pacific; individuals will ultimately prefer and seek nonbelligerent, pacifistic solutions (Idem., Foreword, n.d.: 32).

Sa'id explains that citizens in just societies understand that living a good life is more precious than death due to resistance or war; consequently, people avoid causing harm or using brutal force on themselves or against others. People living in an enlightened, nonviolent society will not feel the need to attack others to threaten the safety of their present lives. Sadly, in the 2020s, most people who hear the word jihad immediately associate it with Islamic terrorism--which is an irrational and immoral act specifically intended to cause harm.

To better explain why violent jihad contradicts both monotheism and human reason, Sa'id reviewed the status of jihad throughout Muslim history: 'I can say with utmost confidence that Muslims have suffered so much because of those who used Jihad [...] This manipulation of the term Jihad probably caused more harm to Muslims than any other malpractice.' (Sa'id 2001: 102). For example, during the First Fitna (i.e., civil war), after the second battle, the Battle of Ziffin (657 A.D.), he studied the Khawārij jihad (those who left Muslim society). Sa'id stressed that these Khawārij, who formed the first violent movement in Islamic history, were considered by Muslim believers to be irrational and illegitimate idolaters. Contrary to the permissible use of jihad only in self-defense, the Khawārij wanted to create a state utilizing aggressive force by violent coup; they brutally forced their opinions on others, making them illegitimate, according to Islamic theology, as well as countering logic and ethics (Sa'id, 2013: 24; idem., n.d., 'The Conditions for Violence in Islam').

Ultimately, Khawārij tactics and policies lead to tyranny since those who rule by force, against the will of their subjects, like the Khawārij, tend to fear the potential loss of their status and privileges if they did establish pluralism, equality, and democracy. Hence, Sa'id claims that the Khawārij use of coercion and violence is similar to the tactics of today's terrorists.

Pacifism, Monotheism, and Human Reason

In Sa'id's opinion, pacifism (as well as nonviolence) is compatible with monotheism. He claims that human history did not start with murder or crime. On the contrary, Adam learned to manage conflicts with 'absolute pacifism' rather than violence. (Sa'id, 2009). Sa'id encourages others to emulate Adam: 'Let us say goodbye to arms, let us break swords and bows and arrows, let us follow in the steps of Adam's Son, who our Prophet, ordered us to take for a model.' (Al-Rif'ee, 1998).

Moreover, Sa'id states that all the divine Prophets relayed the same monotheistic message from God—to seek human justice. Monotheism calls for justice, as well as pacifism, and these Prophets served as God's messengers, gradually spreading the message to all Humanity (Sa'id, 2001: 89; idem., n.d., Foreword: 19). Sa'id emphasizes that the Prophets never waged wars against disbelievers; instead they only fought against injustice and those who would attempt to enforce 'the law of the jungle. The Prophet Muhammad's wars were sporadic and fought only with Allah's permission. 'Some Muslims used to say to the Prophet: 'By Allah, if you give the command, we shall attack them like one man,' and he used to reply: 'No, we have not been instructed to do that.' (Sa'id, n.d., Foreword: 32). Moreover, Sa'id says that during the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, he prohibited killing by Muslim soldiers (Ibid: 7, 41-42); '[...] even if disbelief occurs, it is no cause in Islam for killing people (Ibid.:

45). But this is not entirely historically accurate.

However, in Sa'id's thinking, the 'pacifistic' Meccan period and the initial Islamic period in Medina were more significant than the temporary violence between the Muslims in Medina and the oppressors in Mecca (Ibid. :36-37).

The divine Prophets' preachings for world peace became a part of Humanity's preserved and recorded heritage, i.e., knowledge based on the compatibility of faith in God, justice and pacifism. Sa'id explains: 'Prophets started to appear, together with other individuals who commanded justice – they were on the side of the unity of humankind.' (Ibid.: 19). Also, 'all true prophets have preached the same message because monotheism, as I have explained above, is not only a theological matter but a socio-political issue. [...] The human soul is sacred and may not be murdered for the sake of ideas.' (idem., 'The Conditions for Violence in Islam').

Sa'id in Foreword (n. d.: 19) claims that the others who did not accept monotheism are unenlightened humans who believe in the brutish use of violent force: 'they insisted that they alone were 'God's children, but the prophets and the callers to justice said: 'No one is God's child, neither we nor you.' Rather than freeing Humanity from violence, they continue to stockpile and use weaponry to form more modern 'jungle societies': 'the weapons that we buy are soon destroyed, and we buy again at higher prices. This has been Muhammad Ali's problem, and it is the problem of the whole Muslim world: knowledge is not a priority with us, and we are not enthusiastic about it.' (Ibid.: 22-24). He says that they are wrong to believe that they can form a 'justice society' utilizing violence and fearmongering. Moreover, those who refuse to accept faith in one God and the value of justice are considered enemies of the Prophets and Humanity due to their ignorance.

In one of his other interviews, Sa'id makes a shocking comparison between the sale of weapons and the barbaric sale of idols to shock both Muslims and non-Muslims in religious and secular societies. He is keeping weapons that distance people from God's truth and instinctively natural process of human prosperity (Al-Rif'ee, 1998).

Sa'id claims that only harmonious monotheistic societies seeking justice and practicing pluralism can eliminate the dichotomy between oppressors and the oppressed. Citizens in an egalitarian society are equal under the law and are more prone to acknowledge that all unique, individual humans are of the same species and share the same Humanity; different peoples should not be denigrated, and diversity should be appreciated (Sa'id, 'The Conditions for Violence in Islam'; idem., 'The Role of Religious Actors'; idem., 'Intellectuals: The Blinds Guides', Jawdat Said.net, n.d.).

In Sa'id's view, monotheism teaches its practitioners to refuse to be instruments in the hands of those who want to impose their religion with force (Sa'id, 'The Conditions for Violence in Islam'). This explains his critique of the Free Syria Army during the Syrian Civil War in 2011. He stresses that those Muslims who accept violence or promote acts of violence, purportedly 'as an Islamic duty', should be considered terrorists since they misrepresent and corrupt Islam (Sa'id, 1993: 40.; idem., 2001: 83).

As mentioned, Sa'id prohibits using force, excluding cases of self-defense (with restrictions). In cases of conflict, it is best to prevent violence, but if the aggressor does not stop, only then is it permitted to defend himself (Sa'id, 'The Conditions for Violence in Islam'). Subsequently, Sa'id claims that the institution of war has no relevance today and insists that Muslim preachers promote the cessation of the use of violence in human society by explaining why, ultimately, violence only brings harm and loss (Sa'id, 1993, p. 40).

The Prophet Muhammad and the Rashidun are Role Models for Pacifism

Sa'id rejects non-Muslim leaders as role models for Islamic pacifism. In his opinion, Islam gave the Muslims the Prophet Muhammad, a leader who preferred a pacifistic approach to violence and warfare. Moreover, the example set by the Rashidun (the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, 631-662 A.D.) should serve as a role model for Muslim rulers and leaders

today. Throughout history, the Prophets forbade violence in failed attempts to create normative societies (Sa'id, 1993: 18; idem., 'The Conditions for Violence in Islam').

The Prophet Muhammad and the Rashidun neither usurped authority by the sword nor did they bequeath it to their sons at the end of their reigns. These leaders attained their rights to rule the Muslim states thanks to their meritorious traits, decent behaviors, and religiosity—as 'Islamic meritocracies,' rather than taking power through fear, might, and subjugation: 'the Qur'an declares that the ruler who comes through coercion is not *rashid* (someone who is legitimately in power, morally and intellectually mature), but a *taghut* (tyrant) and is thus illegitimate.' (Sa'id, 'The Conditions for Violence in Islam'). Also, Sa'id mentions that 'no khalifah in Muslim history was ever labeled '*rashid*' (singular for *rashidun*) after that. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the practice stopped because all the other khalifahs came to power either through the sword or heredity.' (Ibid).

In his summary of a seminar Sa'id gave in 2009, he stated that, after the Prophet Muhammad died, the responsibility for governance was transferred to 'the people of knowledge,' i.e., the intellectuals: 'to bring people out of darkness into light, from injustice, [...] from corruption and bloodshed.' (Sa'id, 2009). Even before the first of the Rashidun had come into power, the Muslims had implemented the use of the democratic tool of *shūrā* (consultation), which is mentioned twice in the Qur'an (Q. Al-Imran, 3:159; Sād, 38:42). Whenever complex issues arose, Muslim leaders and believers would consult with each other before determining the best solutions (Sa'id, 1993, p. 15). In another case, Sa'id recommends that 'the way to overcome this situation is not by assassinating or murdering the dictator, but by not obeying him – for the Islamic rule is: 'No obedience is due if commanded to do what is sinful.' (Ibid.: 28-29).

Sa'id relies on Allah's determinations of what is 'good' and 'bad,' which are consistent with human reason -- violence is an inappropriate tool for building something good (such as a just, pluralistic, and egalitarian society). Thus, he recommends that Muslim individuals, intellectuals, and theologians behave according to the role models established by the Prophet Muhammad and the Rashidun. This means that no one may dictate his/her opinion to others under compulsion, nor should an individual change his/her opinion due to fearful threats of incurring violence (Ibid.: 58.).

Regarding the above, it is essential to note Sa'id's thoughts about the treatment of non-Muslims in Muslim states and abroad. Although Sa'id is a Muslim intellectual and theologian who emphasizes the significance of faith in Allah and the importance of the religious duties of Muslims, he accepts the existence of secular or atheistic societies that ignore or reject monotheism, Islam, and divine commandments; he says: 'The unbeliever has the right to survive in all his/her dignity.' (Sa'id, Foreword: 7). As the Qur'an states: 'There is no compulsion in religion.' (Q. Al-Baqarah, 2:256) Moreover, '... those who warred not against you on account of religion... that you should show them kindness and deal justly with them...' (Al-Mumtahanah, 60:8), i.e., Allah approves of freedom of the individual, democracy, and pluralism (Ibid.).

The Revolution and the Power of Intellectual Jihad

Sa'id calls for a social, political, and monotheistic revolution in gentle terms. He encourages individuals to act like in the 2011 civil protests in Syria (Ibid.: 7-8.). The nature and terminology of this revolution are intellectual, theological, pacifistic, and monotheistic. Monotheism and knowledge, or human reason, can provide alternative solutions to human violence. Acts of pacifism must be conscious and reasonable; those engaging in them must believe in the possibility of change. This revolution follows from the Qur'anic verse in Surah Al-Ra'd (13:11): '...Allah changes not the condition of a folk until they [first] change that which is in their hearts...' (Sa'id, 1988, p. 16).

The revolution will start with reading and rereading the Qur'an and other relevant sources, old and new (Sa'id, 1988, p. 17). Sa'id claims Muslims received the Qur'an but did

not derive enough wisdom from it. He affirms that Islam is capable of both peace and war (i.e., violence is not forbidden in Islam), but he stresses that Islam neither demands nor precludes aggression. Furthermore, Sa'id states that Islam has no universal nature, so Muslims should not attempt to force their religion, as well as their opinions, on others (Sa'id, 1993, pp. 58-59). Sa'id preaches the prohibition of using violence in the name of Islam because, in his opinion, Islam demands the elimination of the use of force based on specific Qur'anic texts (Sa'id, 1993, pp. 37-38).

Hence, Sa'id encourages constant reading and studying of the primary sources; this promotes the development of the readers' 'tolerant heart and expansive mind, open-mindedness, merciful heart, and generosity.' (Sa'id, 1988: 16). He recommends the practice of *ijtihad* (making an effort), studying Islamic law and learning original or new, independent interpretations of problems not precisely covered by the Qur'an, reading Hadith (traditions concerning the Prophet Muhammad's life and utterances), and *ijmā'* (scholarly consensus), making intellectual efforts to achieve justice and attain a stable society and peace on Earth. Sa'id condemns intellectuals who talk about 'the end of history' or the 'clash of civilizations'; he calls such 'intellectuals': 'the new custodians of the God of war.' Sa'id refuses to accept that Humanity is nearing its end. On the contrary, he claims that Humanity is nearing its revolutionary stage (Sa'id, 1988, pp. 17-18).

In Sa'id's manifesto, we can see the compatibility of faith and human reason. The combination of both factors has been familiar to Humanity since the early days of God's prophetic messengers. Today's intellectuals will be the pioneers of the future revolution: 'they should head religious revivalism in the world and perform tasks suitable to repentance, for the world has reached the dawn of the birth of a global democracy that acknowledges the equality of all people.' (Sa'id, n.d., 'Intellectuals: The Blinds Guides'.)

Intellectuals can manage crises because they pose intellectual problems before becoming political ones. Sa'id says: 'the world is in crisis because the intellectual is in crisis, and this applies to all global issues: the environment, global warming, the food crisis, the financial crisis, the coexistence crisis, conflict, and wars. It concluded that all crises have their roots in the mind; all begin with crises of ideas.' (Sa'id, 2009). As mentioned above, after the period of the Prophets, the responsibility of raising Humanity out of the darkness was transferred to those with knowledge, such as scholars and scientists. Today, the time of the intellectuals has come. Sa'id states that Islamic intellectual jihad (by pen or word) is synonymous with his pacifistic approach.

Sa'id promotes intellectual jihad in his speeches, seminars, and lessons in the Qur'an, interviews on Arabic satellite television, and posts in his profile on Facebook. Intellectual jihad has an altruistic nature with two goals. The first goal is to eliminate any form of violence in the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds. The second goal is strengthening communication with non-Muslims, which Sa'id calls 'communication in harmony' (al-Rif'ee, 1998).

Sa'id advocates for the 'jihad of the pen' in his homeland, Syria. He cosigned the renowned Damascus Declaration in 2005, demanding multiparty democracy and the equality of all citizens within a secular and sovereign Syria (The Damascus Declaration', 2012). Moreover, towards the end of 2011, he wrote open letters criticizing Bashar Assad's policy toward the Circassian minority in Syria. He also signed an appeal to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev for the protection of the Circassian minority when the violence increased in Syria (Neflyasheva, 2012).

CONCLUSION

One of the main conclusions of my research is that Sa'id is more of a pacifistic intellectual and theologian rather than an advocate of nonviolent activism. However, he is not an 'absolute pacifist' since he reluctantly accepts the limited use of reciprocal violence only in cases of self-defense. He supports the use of nonviolent resistance to dictatorships

and tyrannical policies, e.g., using ‘jihad of the pen.’ Sa’id’s pacifism is based on Islamic theology and human reason but applies to every society, religious and secular, towards the eradication of injustice and violence. Sa’id believes that Humanity is facing a crucial stage in its evolution. In his manifesto, he calls to intellectuals and believers to spearhead this much-needed pacifistic revolution; he believes that it can succeed because it is a natural process in the evolution of Humanity and God’s will.

According to Sa’id, violence is always followed by more violence. To prefer violence over other methods is a lousy instinct in humans, believers, and non-believers as one. Sa’id condemns all terrorism or terrorist acts, including violent jihad. He says that Muslims should not harm others for the sake of their ideals. Moreover, Sa’id condemns self-sacrifice, especially as practiced by radical suicide bombers; the deaths of martyrs, he claims, do not serve Islam but rather blacken its name. No individual is entitled to make such a decision without a normative society’s authorization, and no rational society would approve of such fanatically violent acts under most circumstances.

Sa’id sees in the Prophet Muhammad, a legitimate ruler who chose a pacifistic approach in the face of his enemies. The Prophet demanded that even where no ‘justice society’ is ruled by an ethical leader, people should strive to maintain nonviolent behavior in places lacking behavioral guidelines and discipline. In the early Islamic period, the Muslims adopted pacifism as part of their natural evolution from a city-state to a state with democratic values. Establishing a council (shura) was sanctioned by Islamic tenets and aligned with many democratic principles. Only after the Prophet Muhammad had established a normative ‘society of justice’ of faithful believers in Medina did violent, ‘defensive’ jihad become a legitimate tool in the defense of Islam and Muslim believers against those who had begun attacking them first. Likewise, today, the use of defensive jihad is legitimate only in the unavoidable cases of independent, just, and pluralistic Muslim societies that come under life-threatening attack.

Sa’id stresses that the ‘democratic’ Muslim state founded during the Rashidun era formed the basis for Islamic pacifism and nonviolent policies. As for criticizing or conducting civil disobedience against tyrants and despots, Sa’id is firm in his call for the proactive use of nonviolent jihad (of the pen or word) when striving to implement justice and stop human rights violations by exercising freedom of speech. Jawdat Sa’id shows both Muslims and non-Muslims the compatibility and value of integrating monotheism, democracy, pluralism, and pacifism, as supported by a combination of reasonable (secular) explanations and fundamental Islamic texts.

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