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Question: How do the words and deeds of Islamic terrorists, or Muslims who call for acts of terror and violence, emulate the words and deeds of Muhammad?

Current Fountains of Terror

“When the apostle [Muhammad] rejoined his family he handed his sword to his daughter Fatima, saying, ‘Wash the blood from this, daughter, for by God it has served me well today.’” (Ishaq, 389)

Terrorist acts, and criminal acts of violence or calls to violence - which may or may not fit some scholars or policy makers definition of terrorism (Hoffman, 30, 33) - have plagued the modern era of international terrorism since 1968 (Hoffman, 62). Three main wellsprings have been the source of this epidemic of violence: ethno-Nationalist movements (including secessionist movements), Marxist-Leninist organizations, and religious terrorist groups (Hoffman, 84, 85).

The death toll from religious terrorism has far surpassed those of Nationalist and Marxist terrorism (Hoffman, 88). And while religious purveyors of violence clearly include Jewish, Christian, and Hindu militants, the overwhelming percentage of attacks – as well as the related deaths and injuries – has come from Islamists (Hoffman, 88).

While scholars readily make the connection between certain elements of Islam and terrorism, they often fail to make any connection to Muhammad. For example, in his

in depth study, *Deadly Connections*, Daniel Byman frequently shows that certain Islamic groups foment violence, and use theology to ignite it (Byman, 179, 182, 201, 225).

Nevertheless, he does not *mention Muhammad's name, nor quote him* one time in his work. Likewise Bruce Hoffman, in his seminal treatise, *Inside Terrorism*, spends page after page on Islamic terrorism, Al Qaeda, Osama bin Ladin, et. al (Hoffman, 81-130), yet like Byman, does not mention Muhammad's name nor quote him in his entire book.

Only slightly better, *The 9/11 Commission Report* says of Osama bin Ladin – arguably the most infamous terrorist alive – that he “...saw himself as called ‘to follow in the footsteps of the Messenger and to communicate his message to all nations...’” (9/11 Report, 48). As the 9/11 Report unfolds – while obtusely acknowledging that bin Ladin was using “cultural and religious allusions” from the Quran and Islamic history, even mentioning the “golden days” of “the prophet Muhammad” (9/11 Report, 50) – the authors never made the direct connection between “The Messenger’s” words and deeds and the words and deeds of Osama bin Ladin, even though bin Ladin has left a deliberate, extensive record, quoting the Quran and Muhammad, stating that he [Osama] strives to “follow in the footsteps of the messenger [Muhammad]” (9/11 Report, 48).

This work seeks to fill this important gap, and will therefore focus on the words and deeds of Islamic terrorists and Muslims who call for violence, and the words and deeds of Muhammad – “the Messenger” – the self-professed apostle, prophet, and slave of Allah.

### *The Sunnah - The Traditions of Muhammad*

The Prophet [Muhammad] said, "My example and the example of what I have been sent with is that of a man who came to some people and said, 'O people! I have seen the enemy's army with my own eyes, and I am the naked warner; so protect yourselves!' Then a group of his people obeyed him and fled at night proceeding stealthily till they were safe, while another group of them disbelieved him and stayed at their places till

morning when the army came upon them, and killed and ruined them completely. So this is the example of that person who obeys me and follows what I have brought (the Quran and the Sunna), and the example of the one who disobeys me and disbelieves the truth I have brought" (Bukhari, Volume 9, Book 92, Number 387).

Students of history, philosophy, and law note the presence of a central hero, role model, philosopher, or teacher in most cultures of the world. I.e., "Christendom" has Christ; Israel has Moses; Buddhist nations have the Buddha; Confucius' teachings play a central role in China and its region; and in the last century certain nations – or at least their leaders – have vigorously adopted the teachings of Karl Marx.

In like manner, Islamic nations have Muhammad as their central figure, philosopher, and hero. But beyond being an "example" in a romantic, didactic, or deistic sense, the "Traditions of the Prophet" – or the *Sunnah* as they are properly called – are foundational in the structure of Islamic culture and law. The Sunnah – sometimes called the Hadith - takes second place only to the Quran, which Muslims believe is the Word of God. The Sunnah are a record of the words and deeds of Muhammad, transferred by word of mouth until they were gathered, verified, written, and codified by Muslim scholars within the Muslim community, within two hundred and fifty to three hundred years of Muhammad's death (Nigosian, 83, 84).

From the very beginning up to the present day, the words and actions (sunnah, trodden path) of the prophet Muhammad have served as the ideal model for all Muslim believers to emulate... Thus, the sunnah of Muhammad as recorded in the Hadith is the vital integrating force directing the daily lives of millions of Muslims the world over. For more than thirteen hundred years Muslims have modeled their lives after their prophet Muhammad. They awaken every morning as he awakened; they eat as he ate; they wash as he washed; and they behave even in the minutest acts of daily life as he behaved. The presence of the Prophet is felt, as it were, in a tangible way, as much through the Hadith as through the Quran (Nigosian, 80-81).

The Islamic devotion to the Sunnah or the Hadith – or the Traditions of the Prophet as they are also called – is universal, from small and great, rich and poor, layman and cleric, subjects and ruler; "...the Hadith has been to Muslims as vital a source of

spiritual guidance as the Quran. For Muslims, to reject the Hadith is to reject the Quran. Hadith, the Quran, and the prophet Muhammad are inseparable...” (Nigosian, 84).

This foundational devotion to the Sunnah is found in Islamic governments as well. For example, the Saudi constitution delineates the role of the Sunna and the “tradition” of Muhammad in its government:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic state with Islam as its religion; God's Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet, God's prayers and peace be upon him, are its constitution, Arabic is its language and Riyadh is its capital. (Article 1)

Government in Saudi Arabia derives power from the Holy Koran and the Prophet's tradition. (Article 7)

The courts will apply the rules of the Islamic Shari'ah in the cases that are brought before them, in accordance with what is indicated in the Book and the Sunnah, and statutes decreed by the Ruler which do not contradict the Book or the Sunnah. (Article 48)

Likewise Pakistan – until recently, one of the foremost terrorist sponsors in the world – incorporates the Sunnah (the traditions) of Muhammad in the foundation of its Constitution and laws:

#### Preamble

Whereas sovereignty over the entire Universe belongs to Almighty Allah alone, and the authority to be exercised by the people of Pakistan within the limits prescribed by Him is a sacred trust;

Wherein the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice, as enunciated by Islam, shall be fully observed;

Wherein the Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and Sunnah...

All existing laws shall be brought in conformity with the Injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah, in this Part referred to as the Injunctions of Islam, and no law shall be enacted which is repugnant to such Injunctions.

The constitution and/or laws of most Islamic nations have similar inclusions of the traditions of Muhammad. The point is that the western reader must understand that as much as any culture in the world honors the life and teaching of its central figure – and perhaps more – the Muslim world seeks to imitate the traditions of Muhammad.

### Some Important Details for this Work

The *Sunnah*, or *Sunna*, should not be confused with *Sunni*, which is the predominant sect of Muslims, and from which these Sunnah are derived. In addition, as seen above, the *Hadith* are often used or referred to in place of the *Sunna*. The Hadith are the collections of the sayings of Muhammad. For a simplified yet practical understanding, the hadith, the Sunnah, and “The Tradition of the Prophet” basically mean the same thing: i.e., the extra Quranic record of Muhammad’s deeds and words, as well as things he permitted to happen in his presence (Goldschmidt, 435, 453).

According to Islamic dogma, the Quran is the Word of God, and contains only the words of God, *not* the words of Muhammad. The Quran is a fairly short book, only about one eighth (1/8) the size of the Old and New Testaments. By comparison, the Hadith or Sunna – the sayings and deeds of Muhammad – comprise hundreds of thousands of passages, dwarfing the Quran and the Bible combined.

Also note, there is no universally agreed upon transliteration between Arabic and English. Hence, the word *Koran* (in English) might also be spelled *Quran* or *Qu’ran*. *Sunnah* is also spelled *Sunna*. When quoting various authors, I shall defer to the transliteration used in that source.

When Islamic sources quote or refer to Muhammad, the phrase “Peace be upon him” is repeated after virtually every mention of his name. For the sake of brevity and readability, “Peace be upon him” (PBUH) will be omitted, and shall *not* be replaced by an “...”. The same rule shall apply when any other name or title referring to Muhammad is used, such as “the apostle,” “the prophet,” “God’s servant,” “God’s apostle,” etc. (followed by PBUH). At times, the same editorial rule of abbreviation will apply when