

## **Jihad, Empire and the Ethics of War and Peace**

**S Parvez Manzoor**

The use of violence for political goals, it has been argued with great conviction, has become dysfunctional<sup>1</sup>. And yet, the dismal reality is that despite its futility as an instrument of public policy, violence has become the defining norm of our times: it incarnates the supreme value of our world-order and constitutes the most cogent argument in the ideological, inter-civilisational dialogue. The moral landscape of our age is strewn with landmines of messianic terror and imperial hubris, wanton violence and vengeful destruction, suicidal attacks and pre-emptive strikes, sacred jihads and secular crusades! War or peace, imperial expansion or popular resistance, world-domination or world-order, multilateralism or unilateralism, warring tribes or human community are the stark alternatives that have become the stuff of our nightmares.

The dominant political discourse today is nothing but a virulent indictment of Muslim activism and an atavistic exercise in the vilification of Islam itself. Primeval passions rather than reasoned arguments inform the public debate, just as invective and diatribe are the order of the day. Simply remaining within the ideational ambit of Islam is now a personal liability: it entails facing formidable existential challenges and confronting all the crusading fury of the powers-that-be. The Muslim must now constantly run for cover and respond to the imperial demands for compliance and acquiescence – not only politically but also ideologically, not only militarily but also morally. Then, there is the escalating spiral of violence and counter-violence - the total collapse of moral order in the gruesome chain of kidnappings and decapitations in Fallujah and the annulment of war ethics and sanctioning of sadistic savagery in Abu-Ghuraib - which provides little incentive for any dispassionate inquiry and soul-searching.

Nonetheless, if we have to defeat the modern nihilism with an Islamic face, if we are not to be made hostages to the dysfunctional logic of violence and counter-violence, if we are not to become prisoners to the Manichaeian rhetoric of Empire and Terror, a frank and forthright dialogue with modernity, beyond the moral equivocation of the political intellect or the sham sanctimony of political correctness, is indispensable. Islam means peace and the Muslim community of today must move beyond the violence of Terror and Empire both. It must

rediscover its original calling as that of 'being witness unto mankind, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil'.

One may justifiably argue that for the Muslim conscience, the only cogent reading of contemporary violence in the merciless world of Fallujah and Abu Ghuraib is that even within the house of Islam the nihilistic logic of modernity seems to have triumphed over the demands of faith and humanity. Still, we must re-examine the seminal issues of faith and violence, transcendence and existence, politics and morality that all intersect in the case of war, and which have been the subject of unending debates and controversies within Islam and outside it. More specifically, we must return to the seminal doctrine of Jihad, to which Muslims have tenaciously clung despite all attempts at vilification from the outside and all efforts to deplete it of existential finality and decisiveness from the inside. And we must certainly ask, what complicity, if any, it carries for the unspeakable horrors of Berslan and other scenes of 'Islamist' violence!

Jihad, to express it succinctly and forthrightly, is the comprehensive and definitive doctrine of classical Islam whose reflexive ground is the concrete historical moment when the Muslim Self and its Other (the self determined to terminate Muslim existence) are locked in a mortal combat. Needless to say that it is in the nature of such an existential premise that the tension between the moral and the political imperatives of Islamic conscience can never be fully resolved. For, one may affirm Muslim existence through wilful action, and may even achieve such an objective, but it can be done so only at the cost of one's own life or that of another human being! To affirm one's right to existence, when it is physically threatened or ideologically denied, is then the essence of jihad. *The doctrine of jihad announces the existential imperative of the survival of the historical community as a legal norm.*

Traditionally understood, jihad enunciates a paradigm of struggle which is for the most part internal, spiritual and peaceful, but which also expresses strategic, legal and collective justification, *ratio legis*, for going to war. More than that, it articulates a moral framework for regulating the conduct of war, thus providing a comprehensive theory which incorporates the concerns of both *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. As such, the Islamic doctrine displays unmistakable affinity with other morally paradoxical teachings, ancient as well modern, religious as well as secular, that recognize, under strict moral criteria, the justifiability and legality of war. Yet, it is also in the nature of Islam's transcendent moorings that Jihad can never be a war for the sake of war, a war of instrumental reasoning and worldly glory. Whenever such a war takes place, no matter what the identity of the combatants, it is indisputably un-Islamic. In facing the moral challenges of war, we may not therefore merely submit to the depressing, albeit undeniable, fact of the human condition, namely that the morally irreproachable ethic of survival also entails existential struggle, even extinguishing human life itself! No, our ethical reflection and moral sensitivity must extend beyond the justifiability of war to its

actual conduct. It must probe not only the legitimacy of the just struggle but also the means to achieve its ends, not merely the 'why' of jihad but its 'how' as well.

Our goal however is neither to critique the classical theory nor to present an account of its changing role in the life of the modern community, but to expose and bring into high relief those aspects of it which are of concern to the modern man; its perceptions, modes of articulation, teleological axioms etc that cause much tension in inter-civilisational debates. To achieve this, we'll not only look into the unresolved aporia of the classical theory but also explore the alternative ethical models which have been proposed by the secular thinkers of our times. But most important of all, we shall examine them against the evidence of history, against the actual practice and technique of modern warfare, in order to elicit normative insights.

The underlying theoretical claim of this inquiry is that the modern practice of jihad, as carried out by extremist groups, is transforming the classical doctrine from a legal and communitarian norm into a personal and pietistic, indeed nihilistic ideology of protest! Further, the contention is that this perversion of jihad, the doctrine of utmost struggle and sacrifice for the preservation of faith, into a political ideology of indiscriminate violence and terror is the most egregious display of the secularised consciousness of modernity - whatever its rhetoric and 'Islamic' pretensions! Far from being anchored in the legalistic discourse of the *fiqh*, it represents its negation in theory and a revolt against its all too pragmatic and mundane logic in practice. Indeed, the *fiqhi* tradition is now severely indicted among jihadi groups for fostering a quietist ethos rather than a revolutionary fervour which their own, modernist reading of the Islamic ethos brings to relief.

The transition of jihad from *fard kifaya* to *fard 'ain*, from collective obligation to personal duty, is the most telling sign of the politicisation of the Muslim mind. For such a modification dispenses with all the stipulations and provisos of the sacred law and, along with it, the rule of the instrumental reasoning of the *faqih* and his pragmatic benchmark of the *maslaha* (wellbeing) of the community. Instead of being a collective decision, reached after deliberation and debate and proclaimed by the legitimate authority of the *umma*, the imam, jihad as the *fard 'ain* of the extremists degenerates into a purely subjective fantasy, a mere whim of undisciplined thought and fanatical piety. We must, on our part, assert with utmost vigour and sincerity that jihad as *fard 'ain* can only be internal and peaceful, aimed at the strengthening of the faith, purification of the soul and not at the promotion of political, perforce parochial, goals. If it is to become part of an armed struggle, indispensable for the preservation of the collective self, it must be legal and public, vouchsafed by *fiqhi* reason and authorised by the supreme authority. This, at any rate, is how it was understood in the pre-modern Muslim consciousness, a consciousness which had not been secularised and which had not struck any deal with the political idols of modernity.

Paradoxically, the proclamation of jihad as *fard 'ain* brings into play the same kind of moral paradoxes and logical aporia which plague modern political theory and practice when jurists and legal philosophers invoke the concept of the state of exception, emergency, siege or martial law<sup>2</sup>. However, what to its modern critic, given the secular premises of modern state theory, is an indictment, may present itself to the Muslim *faqih* as the ultimate argument for the upholding of the transcendental 'law'. The modern protest, questioning the foundational logic of the secular state-theory itself, expresses itself as: 'It is certain, in any case, that if resistance were to become a right or even a duty (the omission of which could be punished), *not only would the constitution end up positing itself as an absolutely untouchable and all-encompassing value, but the citizen's political choice would also end up being determined by juridical norms.*'<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding the apparent symmetry of the two juridical schemes that perceive the state as the supreme value, let's not be hasty in our judgment of the Islamic legal tradition. Let's probe the underpinnings of the *fiqhi* discourse, to deconstruct it as it were, before drawing any definite conclusions about its role in the global scheme of things. The first striking difference that we notice, despite the Islamists' propensity for conceiving *Shari'a* as the positive law of a putative Islamic state, is that statehood and citizenship are not parts of the *fiqh's* vocabulary, indeed of his perception. Further, the constitution that the Muslim jurist seeks to uphold is nothing but Islam, the transcendent faith of a historical community. Only as a conduit of the revealed faith may the historical community, the Muslim *umma*, be conceived, juridically and not merely metaphysically, 'as an absolutely untouchable and all-encompassing value'.

To this, however, we may also add that the legalistic vision of faith as the immanent community of believers, a contractual entity or even a constituted body, is neither identical nor coterminous with Islam, the transcendent faith of a submitting soul, a Muslim. It is a gift of the jurist's logic and an inevitable corollary of his methodology of delineating faith as practice, as law. However, even the legal metaphor of Islam as state cannot be unanchored from its transcendental and metaphysical moorings. It remains beyond the ken of political calculus and instrumental rationality. Defining the *umma*, empirically and concretely and not merely abstractly and ideally, at this point in history or at any other point of historical time, remains as problematical and intractable as defining the individual's faith. In truth, then, the jurist's discourse in Islam is not congruent with any system of positive law which embodies the political will of the modern, secular state. The 'secularisation' of the *Shar'ia* as a positive, enforceable law is a modern, post-colonial heresy.

Ignoring the inquisitional atmosphere within which all debate about Islam now takes place, we may still ask, in which sense, if at all, we may construe *Shari'a* as the legal system of an historical order, or the constitution of a polity? Whatever the response, one thing is certain, namely that every empirical scheme of the *Shari'a* as positive law achieves its political actuality through the

application of a radically reductionist vision, a vision which virtually dispenses with the transcendent dimension of the faith. The politicisation of the *Shari'a* comes at the price of its secularisation: as the positive law of a state it becomes indistinguishable from the legal code of any other coercive order. Any deeper analysis of the *fiqhi* discourse, the mode *par excellence* for the elucidation and understanding of the *Shar'ia*, would however reveal that the legal norms that the *Shari'a* promulgates always have an extra-legal dimension and the political will that it sometimes appeals to has a trans-political meaning. *In the final analysis, the legal vision of Islam promotes order without coercion, law without enforceability, political community without the state-principle!* In a world-order whose constituent principle is force, it testifies to the persistence of Islam's commitment to transcendence. To turn it into an instrument of coercion is to betray its spirit.

And yet, for his/her commitment to transcendence, the Muslim too is a child of history. It is worth recalling that the theories of jihad, though based on the original sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunna, were expounded at a time when Muslims were an imperial power. It was in 'the age of Empires' that the classical 'ideology' of jihad achieved its 'canonical status', even if it was never universally accepted and its protagonists were not successful in having it recognised as 'the sixth pillar of faith'. Yet, there's no mistaking that the classical theory bears the stamp of those times. Not only are some of its provisos imperial in tone and triumphalist in vision, the underlying premises of its conceptual framework - the division of the world into *dar-al-islam* and *dar-al-harb* and the postulation of an eternal conflict between them - are morally problematical and politically untenable.

Fortunately, these grand ideological schemes are now only of historical interest and have little practical significance. In fact, the imperial politics that it endorsed had become defunct long before the coming of modernity which brought in its own forms of colonialism. At any rate, modern Muslim conscience has no reason to perpetuate the imperial fantasies of Abbasid or Ottoman ideologues simply because these are couched in the language of religion. Hopefully, Islam's flirtation with the imperial idea is a thing of the, very remote, past. *If the Umma is in search of a vocation today, it can only find it in the pursuit of egalitarian, liberating and anti-imperialist goals.*

Despite all these, hopefully justified strictures, it would be naïve and erroneous to dismiss the medieval jurist merely as a tool of the imperialist ambition. To start with, there is in his discourse the frustrating ambiguity, or the proverbial 'confusion', of the contrary demands of *Din* and *Dawla*, of religious mission and worldly empire. And what appears as an imperial project may as easily be construed as an eschatological metaphor of faith, a Platonic attempt at the incarnation of a transcendent truth in an immanent, historical body-politic. Paradoxically, however, despite the triumphalist dimensions of their vision, nay the Manichean foundations of their metaphorical expression, the medieval jurists

of Islam were on the way to expounding a theory of international relations that dispensed with the mystical language of faith and relied more on tangible criteria such as territory and law!

Seen in this light, then, some of the strictures on the Muslim contribution to the evolution of 'International Law' appear highly partisan and sectarian, distinguished only by a gratuitous display of sanctimonious ire. A modern critic, for instance, asserts that 'The Islamic distinction between *dar al-harb* and *dar al-islam* was fundamentally different [i.e. from the Augustinian scheme of the heavenly and the earthly cities] in origin and conception; not only was it juristic rather than theological, aiming at ensuring right behaviour rather than right motivation, but it defined the world in control of territory rather than the invisible progress of divine grace, and it defined membership in the two spheres by behaviour (submission to God's will, *islam*, whether or not it was accompanied by faith, *iman*) and not the invisible presence of divine grace.'<sup>4</sup>!

On our part, we would pay attention neither the author's invidious comparison nor to his squeamish Christian rhetoric, but merely submit that the jurist's discourse, as it has been duly recognized within Islam, is *zahiri*; it is concerned with the outward, empirically verifiable aspects of the social reality. One may even say that juristic reason represents the Islamic variant of *raison d'état*. Thank God that the poor jurist did not try to measure 'the invisible presence (or progress) of divine grace', or the inner reality of *iman*, and incorporate them in his praxis. Had he done so, he would have become indistinguishable from any inquisitor of the Western church, and perhaps as cruel as well! The notion of divine grace, however, is indispensable to his system<sup>5</sup>. Blissfully, however, he does not wield it as a confessional scourge! That the Muslim jurist devised a *legal* scheme, which was based on 'rule of law' and territory rather than on 'the invisible presence of grace', today stands against him. However, when the same principles, territoriality and legal sovereignty, become, under the aegis of the West, the defining characteristics of statehood, they are deemed salubrious for mankind!

The Muslim, or Christian, romance with Lady Empire may be over, but modernity's heart is aglow with passion for her. In fact, the modern project discloses itself, more and more to its victims at least, as inherently, and perhaps even irredeemably, imperialistic. Given the ever-present challenge of messianic violence and given the resolve of Empire 'to wage eternal war for eternal peace', we may no longer bury our heads in the proverbial sand and pretend as if our faith has no tryst with history. However, to renounce the suicidal politics of terror, which we must, does not mean that we must also swallow the imperial rhetoric of 'freedom'. We must look modernity in the eye and not be terrified by its dehumanising gaze. Indeed, no Muslim thinker may construe modernity as an alien affliction and avoid confronting its claims, political and imperial but also moral and intellectual, with pious disregard.

We must ask, does modernity's claim for authority inevitably translate into the logic of Empire, or, like any other universal vision of the human condition, modernity too is plagued by its own unresolved tensions and inner contradictions? Is modernity inherently an imperial enterprise, which its rhetoric of 'enlightenment' and 'freedom' merely seeks to mask, or does it genuinely cherish hopes of a universal peace that is based on justice and equality for all? Do the power-brokers of modernity, to say it bluntly, honestly believe in a world order without the exploitation and enslavement of the weak by the powerful, or do they employ their rhetoric in a cynical vein just to further their own interests? Indeed, to come to the most disturbing insight of all, is modernity's commitment to *freedom* incommensurate with a world order in which *justice* is the defining norm? Asking these questions may not be construed as a vain exercise in polemics but as an honest bid to determine the orientation of Islamic calling today.

We must realize that while Enlightenment as the foundational myth of modernity is optimistic about the future of an ever-emancipating humanity and promises us a world without violence, the imperial project of modernity seldom redeems that promise. In fact, it is no exaggeration to claim that war and violence must be construed as intrinsic to the modern project, and not merely parts of its prehistory. And yet, modernization theory, the standard interpretation of contemporary history, posits, more or less implicitly that modernity is peaceful. In fact, in the post-World War theory, the non-violent resolution of conflicts is presumed to be the defining feature of modernity. The influential texts of modern theory, one may say without diffidence, contain hardly any mention of war and peace. Nonetheless, it is true to say that the most palpable tension within the political thought of modernity concerns the dreams of a pacifist utopia and the realities of power-politics. Obviously, like any other universal vision, modernity cannot escape the logical contradiction, and existential unity, of the Empire-Mission nexus. It too exhibits the logic of *Din* and *Dawla* as the two opposite sides of the single coin of its project. In this, it discloses itself as any other universal project, Islam including.

Significantly, however, the claim of Enlightenment reason to be sovereign, to be a norm unto itself, has some very disquieting ramifications for the modern project. Its historical unfolding, it has become apparent by now, leads to the gradual denial of transcendence, a cognitive vision that terminates in the moral wasteland nihilism, in the replacement of will-to-truth by will-to-power. (In their pursuit of nihilistic goals, and suicidal terror, Muslim extremist reveal that they too are the children of modernity.) One of the most disturbing insights into the nihilistic ends of the modern project comes from the sombre sociological studies of Zygmunt Bauman, whose inquiry into the Jewish Holocaust led him to conclude that the Holocaust does not constitute a peculiarity of the German history, or an aberration of the modernist ethos<sup>6</sup>. There is instead a direct link between modernity's bureaucratic rationality and its politics of genocide – a

practice that was by no means rare in the modern enterprise of the colonization of non-European peoples<sup>7</sup>.

In a radical but well-documented work, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Bauman demonstrated that the Holocaust is the obverse of modernity; that it represents 'another face of the same modern society whose other, more familiar, face we so admire. And that the two faces are perfectly comfortably attached to the same body.' The Holocaust, he insisted further, cannot be dismissed as the failure of civilization, as the 'hiccups of barbarism' that humanity has to suffer through only temporarily. No, it is part of the same 'morally elevating story of humanity's march towards greater freedom and rationality' that forms the imperious, nay imperial, myth of modernity and Enlightenment. Of course, modern civilization was not, according to him, the Holocaust's *sufficient* condition; but 'it was most certainly its *necessary* condition. Bauman further insinuated that reason not passion, civilization not barbarity, science not superstition, imperils the existence of man as a moral being. He even argued that the bureaucratic logic of the modern state inevitably translates into the imperative of 'final solutions' and that the value-free epistemology of modern science indubitably redeems its claim in the merciless world of the gas chambers. Obviously, Bauman's work has great relevance for any non-Western attempt to appraise modernity as Empire.

Modernity views itself as the emergence of a new consciousness, as the emancipation of man from the shackles of religion and superstition; in a word, as enlightenment. However, modernity is not a mere Platonic idea; it is a historical epoch and a worldly project. The paradigm-shift that modernity accomplishes is then best observed through a study of its politics rather than of its philosophies. In modernity, the organic link between the state, war and legal order, occluded during medieval times by the theories of Jihad and Holy War with their allusions to transcendence, appears clearly in the daylight of the secular sun<sup>8</sup>. If war was the midwife of the modern nation-state, military technology was its handmaiden. As soon as the newly constituted nations of Europe had achieved a strategic balance through military stalemates, they turned their attention to the world outside. Wars were now wars of conquest and were fought and won in distant lands. Sadly, the nature of warfare and, along with it of war ethics, underwent a radical change: it became asymmetric. For, as has been aptly expressed by a historian of imperialism, 'From unsparing severity to massacre is only a few imperial strides.'<sup>9</sup> The world of two-tier morality, our world, was born in the colonies. And today it has returned with a vengeance!

A vivid picture of the colonial 'warfare', and its warrior ethic, may be obtained by revisiting the battle scene of Omdurman, as described by Churchill in *The River War* (1899), and quoted by Lindqvist in *Exterminate the Brutes*<sup>10</sup>. The depiction, Lindqvist comments, is remarkable in that 'the outmoded notions of honour and fair-play, the old-fashioned admiration for courage without hope, valour without prospects of victory, has still not been replaced by the modern idea that the technically superior has the self-evident right to annihilate his enemy, even when



the latter is defenceless.' The bare facts however are the following: At Omdurman the militarily strongest movement of African resistance was, in a matter of hours, totally crushed and humiliated. The great Dervish army of 15000 men, which proudly went to battle at dawn, full of hope and courage, had by noon been routed, leaving behind 9000 dead. According to Churchill, 'the caliph's plan of attack was sensible and well-prepared, except for the one flaw that it fatally underestimated the efficacy of modern weapons.' In the British press, the battle was dramatically illustrated as a close, man to man encounter, whereas the plain fact of the modern slaughter was that the British (and the Egyptians) were totally out of range of the Sudanese fire, and these hapless victims never came closer than 300 meters of the British positions. Imperial casualties, mostly wounded, 48!

Sven Lindqvist: 'So ended the battle at Omdurman – the most brilliant victory which the weapons of science ever had won against the barbarians. Within five hours, the strongest and the best-equipped army of the savages ever to challenge a European super-power had been, without much effort and with relatively small risk and negligible losses for the victors, defeated and put to flight.'

Of all the gadgets of modern technology, nothing has caused more moral havoc than the airplane and the novelty of bombing from above which it introduced. Today, this novelty is the norm of civilized warfare and an incontestable fact of its superiority. The airplane has clearly established itself, from Abyssinia to Dresden, from Hiroshima to Vietnam to Iraq, as the great divider of humanity and the obliterator of all moral compunctions against the indiscriminate slaughter of non-combatants. Indeed, if there's any unique feature of modern warfare, it is the redundancy of the perennial distinction between those who carry arms and those who do not. Combatants today run far lower risks of losing their lives and limbs than non-combatants. Again, Sven Lindqvist has given us a harrowing account of the gradual erosion of the once so powerful moral inhibitions and taboos that this modern tool of wanton destruction has successfully expelled from our hearts and souls. His is a text of modern soul searching and contrition that is indispensable for any reading of modernity's ethics of war and peace.

The Swedish title, which is far less innocuous than the non-descript English rendition as *A History of Bombing*, translates as 'You are dead now!', and actually refers to the game that children play when they act like soldiers. The title alludes thus to the feeling of sport, exhilaration and adventure which according to the author is inherent in the aerial nature of the enterprise itself. A stark example of this comes from Mussolini's son, Bruno, himself a pilot, who during the Abyssinian war recorded his impression of the new sadistic sport as: 'We set them all on fire; the hillocks, fields, small villages... It was really entertaining.. Hardly had the bombs reached the ground before they burst in white flames; an enormous blaze struck and the dry grass started burning. I thought of the animals. God, how they ran.... When the bomb-racks had been emptied, I started

throwing them by hand.... It was really funny.... Encircled by a ring of fire, 5000 Abyssinians went to a horrible death. It was a real inferno down below.!

Indeed, one of the earliest moral apprehensions against the new practice was just that it fostered a sense of omnipotence and invulnerability in the pilot who, secure, unchallenged and high above, could play with his victims as he pleased! (The evolution of defensive technology may have made the pilots less secure, but the sense of power and invulnerability, I presume, persists.) The moral perplexity, or plain duplicity, which the custom of aerial bombing introduces in the ethic of war is also painfully manifest to a modern theorist who laments that by allowing those moral rules to recede from our collective conscious, 'we now find ourselves in the odd position that the crew of a plane who have been bombing a civilian target in clear breach of the rules of war may be shot down, captured, and claim humane treatment under the same rules of law.'<sup>11</sup> In sum, if there's ever a single, continuous thread in this moral tangle, it is that of terror. The history of bombing is quite simply a history of terror. It is not merely accidental then that the opening salvo of the latest Iraq war, solemnly christened by the Pentagon as 'Operation Shock and Awe', manifests itself, the very name belies it, as an instrument of terror. Not surprisingly, it was a merciless barrage of fire from the air.

War, it has been the distressing insight of many a perceptive political thinker, is the linchpin of all statehood. The state exists to master violence, which is the necessary condition for all law. Prior to modernity, however, statehood was never a sovereign principle of politics. It was always subservient to a higher, transcendent, and ultimately universal authority. Secular statehood, on the other hand, forfeits all claims to 'universality' for the safeguarding of its 'sovereignty'. The paradoxical outcome however is that the claim of modern theory stretches far beyond the recognition of the parochiality of the human condition, which is a given of all human thought. For it *legitimizes* it as the political norm, as the human ideal. Stripped of all transcendental trappings, strategic theory now redeems its ideational promise, with the help of the pragmatic calculus of *Realpolitik*, in the radically secularized ideology of war. The concept of 'total war', which was unknown in the pre-modern world, is one such gift of the doctrine of state-sovereignty. For the nation-state, it has been duly noted, 'mobilizes the total resources of the society in pursuit of its political goals, and it is the *nation* of its adversary that it attacks in order to achieve victory.'<sup>12</sup>

The claim of the sovereignty of the state, and by extension that of the nation, shifts the focus of the moral vision from *authority* to *power*, from transcendence to immanence, and, in the final resort, from right to might. True enough, politics, conceived as the art of the possible, cannot remain indifferent to the pragmatic claims of reason and history. However, the political will in modernity, supremely cognizant of the freedom of the human spirit, need not heed any call that demands obedience and submission. Now that the universe that science has revealed to us is found to be bereft of any value, lacking in any expression of

non-human volition, only that is real which is possible. The denial of any transcendent source of authority which is one of the cardinal claims of modern consciousness, thus transforms all politics into power-politics, a realm of coercion masquerading as the art of the possible. It also reveals the nihilistic foundations of modernity as an imperialist project, an ever-expanding regime whose ultimate source of authority is power.

In the following article, we'll further examine, in the mirror of modernity, some features of this 'realistic' view of politics that ultimately removes all distinction between facts and norms. We'll also explore the dialectics of war and peace that terminates in the moral obscenity and logical impossibility of modern slogans like 'eternal war for eternal peace'!

(To be continued...)

---

<sup>1</sup> Schell, J: *The Unconquerable World*. Metropolitan books, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> For an incisive treatment of this notorious conundrum of modern jurisprudence, provocatively brought into high relief by Carl Schmitt, vid. Giorgio Agamben: *The State of Exception*. University of Chicago Press, 2005. The history of the concept is found in pp 11-22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, James Turner: *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997. p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> Manzoor, P.S: 'Legal Rationality vs. Arbitrary Judgement: Re-examining the tradition of Islamic Law', in *Muslim World Book Review*, vol. 21; no. 1 (December 2000), pp. 3-13.

<sup>6</sup> Bauman, Zygmunt: *Modernity and Genocide*. Oxford, Polity Press, 1991.

<sup>7</sup> In a number of well-known studies, the Swedish writer Sven Lindqvist has argued, with ample evidence in hand, that Europe's colonial wars against the 'natives' were genocidal in nature. The Holocaust, he claimed further, was not a unique expression of 'evil' but may in some measure be regarded as a continuation of the policies which imperial powers, especially Britain, has long pursued in their colonies. At the moment of writing this, I have access only to the original texts in Swedish and not to the English translations, and therefore am unable to refer to the page numbers of these editions. In a later study, however, I plan to present a gist of Lindqvist's argument and of the controversy that ensued here in Sweden. The interested reader may consult the following: Lindqvist, Sven: *Exterminate all the Brutes*. New York, New Press, 1996; and, *A History of Bombing*, Granta Books, London, 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Bobbitt, Philip: *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History*. New York, Alfred A Knopf, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Kiernan, V.G: *The Lords of Human Kind*. Hammonds worth, Penguin Books, 1972. p. 117.

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit. vid. n. 7 supra.*

<sup>11</sup> Clark, Stephen R : *Civil Peace and Sacred Order*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989. p. 121.

<sup>12</sup> Bobbitt, Philip: *op. cit.* p 216.

---

Ends