

THE US DESIGNS AND THE DESIRABLE RESPONSE

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The policies of the United States against the Muslim world make its nefarious designs quite clear to those who have the ability to see and discern. What should be our strategy to face this situation? When we study the Holy Qur'an and reflect on the teachings of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), we come across a strategy that could be summarized under just two points: perseverance and wisdom.

Perseverance

Perseverance is to trust in Allah, solemnly and earnestly, and to stick to His Deen, such as it is, with total faith, satisfaction, unshakable belief, and patience. It means ruling out any possibility of compromise on the objective and goal, vision for the future, real targets of the Muslim community and the sources of its strength, its principles, mission and peculiar practical program. We cannot undertake additions and deletions in Islam. Remaining within the bounds of Islam, we observe the guidelines that Allah and His Prophet (pbuh) has prescribed with wholesome conviction and self-inspection and exercise and employ wisdom and intelligence, compliance and ever-new approach of Ijtihad for finding answers to contemporary questions, loyalty and allegiance, tolerance and forbearance, and struggle and sacrifice. Islam is eternal message of Allah, a guidance that will continue till the end of time. Its teachings are ever-fresh like the breeze of early morning, enlivening and refreshing, and all-time-modern. Moderation and balance are its distinguishing hallmarks. These are there in its character, a part and parcel of it. It need not be, and cannot be, made "modern" or "moderate" to fulfill the desires of one's own self or to meet the demands of others.

That it is Islam alone that presents the middle-way is a fact that needs to be understood and grasped. All virtues of balance, tolerance, moderation are present in its system of rights and obligations in their most refined and complete form. Being a "justly balanced" Ummah, it is the Muslim community that observes the approach of moderation in all matters of creed and deed, beliefs and action.

Just glance the history of religions, and you would find that all have gone to one extreme or the other and have been at the throes of confusion with respect to the relationship between God and man, the one who is worshipped and those who worship the Lord and His subject, Allah and His Prophets. Islam made the point clear: God is God and man is man. It is Allah alone who is to be worshipped and adored, who is the Creator of heavens and earth. Man is Allah's vicegerent on earth. This is his job and status. In no way is he associated in Allah's Being or His Attributes. Even the Prophets, though being the best model and placed at the highest level, have no power whatsoever to interfere or share in Allah's control of the universe. It is this line of moderation on which rests the whole system of the universe.

In the history of religions, you would also find confusion, going to one extreme or the other, and 'being silent' on such issues and the relationship between the religion and the mundane, between the religious and the secular, between the spirit and the matter, between the life in this world and the life in the hereafter. It is Islam that adopts a moderate line here as well and presents a balanced and justice-based concept of life that is a beautiful blend of the religious and the secular, a fusion of the spirit and the matter, and the concept of coming together of the goods of this life and the life hereafter. Further, Islam has practically showed how to realize these concepts by giving out a whole scheme about the individual and the society, of personal and collective development.

Similarly, innumerable examples of going to extremes are also found with respect to law and morality, apparent and hidden, word and meaning in the worlds of religions and civilizations, both. Islam adopts a moderate course here as well. And it does so in a way as to meet the demands of the permanence and change in the fulsome and most appropriate manner, so as to enable man to attain both law and the spirit of law at the same time.

Whether the question is about the relationship between the individual and the society or about man and woman, about freedom and discipline or about leadership and obedience, about acts of worship and the business of life, about reform of the self or about the reform of law and system, or about making friendship and dealing with enmity, Islam adopts a moderate view. The Holy Prophet summed us this characteristic feature of Islam when he told "Best of the acts are those that are based on moderation". See how Qur'an and Sunnah have highlighted this feature and made it a focal point in life:

We have made you a justly balanced Ummah that you might be witnesses over the nations and the Messengers a witness over yourselves. **(Al-Baqarah 2:143)**

Of those we have created are people who direct (others) with truth, and dispense justice therewith. **(Al-A'raaf 7:181)**

Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just balance. **(Al-Furqan 25:67)**

They do eat and drink but not indulge in it. They do not commit excess as Allah does not like it:

Eat and drink, but waste not by excess; for Allah does not love the wasters. **(Al-A'raaf 7:31)**

Spending in the way of Allah is their practice, yet in this respect, too, they do not go to extremes. They are neither thrifty nor extravagant:

Make not your hand tied (like a niggard's) to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that you become blameworthy and destitute. **(Al-Isra' 17:29)**

As the Holy Prophet taught, by giving his own example, that while he observed fasting, he did not fast continuously but ate and drank; that he prayed in the dark of the night, yet he took rest as well; and that he did not live a life of celibacy but married.

This makes it amply clear that it is Islam – a way and complete code of life – that is about maintaining balance and moderation, justice and fairness in all spheres of life, it teaches for ensuring others rights and fulfilling one's own obligations, goodness to blood relations, respect for humanity. It even forbids insulting or provocative utterances against the gods of others, calls for refraining from coercion and bullying in religious matters. This is the distinguishing and distinct character of Islam!

This all moderation, balanced approach and tolerant view is very much part of the system of Shariah. It is fundamental and obligatory. But, additions and deletions in Islam in the name of moderation, escape from obligations and duties in the name of balance, relinquishing Jihad for the sake of befriending others, compromise with disbelief, falsehood and hypocrisy in the name adjustment and accommodation – it has nothing to do with Islam. It is an antithesis of Islam, and an escapist approach. Showing any let-up or compromising the teachings and violation of the definitive limits (Ahkam and Hudud) that Allah and His Prophet (pbuh) have established in a bid to please others is the dangerous path and may invite Allah's wrath. What Allah and his Prophet have declared as "desirable" and "required" is really desirable and required for us, and what they have shown their dislike for is also disliked by us and we shun it. This is simply because Islam is the name of revolt against the transgression and establishing link and nearness to Allah:

Whoever rejects Evil and believes in God has grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, which never breaks; and God hears and knows all things. **(Al-Baqarah 2:256)**

There is an immense freedom within the system and framework envisaged by Islam. This freedom is within the system and, as such, to break out of the framework, to search for escape, or to search for freedom outside it runs against Islam.

It is necessary to safeguard the religion (Deen) and keep it pure from interventions. Making changes in religion for the sake of other's pleasure is the way of rebellion against Allah, not His obedience. See what Allah says to His Prophet:

Say: "I have been forbidden to invoke those whom you invoke besides Allah – seeing that the Clear Signs have come to me from my Lord; And I have been commanded to bow (in Islam) to the Lord of the Worlds". **(Al-Ghafir 40:66)**

Say: "I am forbidden to worship those – others than Allah – whom you call upon".
 Say: "I will not follow your vain desires: If I did, I would stray from the path, and be not of the company of those who receive guidance". **(Al-An'am 6:56)**

We have revealed it to be a judgment of authority in Arabic. Were you to follow their (vain) desires after the knowledge which has reached you, then you would find neither protector nor defender against Allah. **(Al-Ra'd 13:37)**

And their purpose was to tempt you away from that which we had revealed unto you, to substitute in our name something quite different. (In that case), behold! They would certainly have made you (their) friend! **(Al-Isra' 17:73)**

When Our Clear Signs are rehearsed unto them, those who rest not their hope on their meeting with us, say: "Bring us a Reading other than this, or change this". Say: "It is not for me, of my own accord, to change it. I follow naught but what is revealed unto me. If I were to disobey my Lord, I should myself fear the Penalty of a Great Day (to come). **(Yusnus 10:15)**

These vividly clear teachings present a mirror in which the picture of those who are on the right path and of those who are on the wrong path can be seen along with the stand and example of the former and desires, whims and demands of the latter. Regardless of the change of times and climes, and regardless of the change of characters on the stage of history, the approach of those who are on the right path does not change, even a bit. Then, this mirror shows not only have those who are arrayed against truth but also exposes 'black sheep'. In it, we can also find the model of perseverance, commitment and loyalty. It is this model that should be our goal.

Follow that which comes to you by inspiration from your Lord, for Allah knows well what you do. And put your trust in Allah, and Allah is enough as a Disposer of affairs. **(Al-Ahzab 33:2-3)**

We put you on the (right) Way of Religion, so follow that (Way), and follow not the desires of those who know not. The will be of no use to you in the sight of Allah. It is only wrong-doers (that stand as) protectors, one to another, but Allah is the Protector of the Righteous. These are clear evidences to men, and a Guidance and Mercy to those of assured Faith. **(Al-Jasiyah 45:18-20)**

Perseverance is the first corner-stone of our strategy and demands that there should be no confusion or perplexity with respect to the objective, mission, targets, and goals; and that to show weakness is to betray the noble cause. The vision should necessarily be clear and no mist should cloud it. To stick to this vision, trust in Allah and faith in His succor, and show patience and

resilience are the hallmarks and distinct features of the people of faith. In this lies their dignified survival and success in the life hereafter.

Wisdom

While perseverance is the first corner-stone of this strategy, wisdom and prudence is its second corner-stone, just as important. Perseverance is not the name of some blind and numb force. Perseverance demands that struggle is carried out with complete consciousness, understanding, maturity and wisdom. And, a correct realization of the objectives, complete understanding of the strategy and its stages, preparation of the outline, detailed planning, effective and practicable arrangement for the provision of resources and related needs, clarity of vision about goals and destination – these all play the key role in this struggle. A deeper study of the Qur'an and the role model of the Prophet (pbuh) tells that wisdom is an essential requisite to carry out the task of Prophethood. The way of perseverance and wisdom is the way through which Muslims, those who have firm and unshakable faith, can reach their goal and destination.

A wise and prudent strategy is the one that is based on moderation and tolerance, justice, dialogue and realization of the importance of mutual understanding.

There are three options before the Muslim community at this critical juncture: to continue with the existing situation of ignorance and escapism; to refrain from becoming a tool in the hands of others and yet avoid confrontation by also; to take the course of confrontation and revenge.

Though doing something under the force of emotions is certainly a way, but the prospects for good are very rare while the possibilities of chaos and washing away the fruits of years of struggle are very high.

The need is to evolve a comprehensive strategy that should include three main points: identification of real targets, attainment of power, and unity of the Muslim world. It should also be realized that Muslims are the community that is trusted with carrying out the task of Prophethood, i.e. to take the message of Allah to every nook and corner of the world and be "witness over nations", that it has to chalk out a multi-faceted strategy, and that it has to give due importance to the operational part. In this multi-faceted strategy would be included such aspects as the ideological and moral foundation, strategic and institutional efforts, and the need of a united stand. At the operational level, efforts have to be made to initiate a genuine dialogue, to do economic and military planning, and to launch a crash program for economic development.

The Desirable Role of Pakistan

Rather than waiting passively for the "inevitable", Pakistan's leadership should give up the practice of submitting and prostrating before the US and re-formulate its economic and foreign policies as a

proud nation in the light of the past experience about the US attitudes. It should take people in confidence and strengthen the Parliament that has come into being in the wake of elections in October (though they may have a lot of flaws) and other democratic institutions. It is an historic and rare opportunity to devise new and lasting policies of far-reaching influence with the help of these institutions. This opportunity should be fully exploited, and must not be wasted. We can play a key-role only if the political and military leaderships rise above their own and personal interests create consensus through dialogue and understanding, and try to bring together all countries on such a central program by which the Muslim world could safeguard its independence, protect its resources and maintain its ideological identity. In such a program, the Muslim world could work for the establishment of justice at the international level to rid the humanity of war, destruction and economic exploitation, and to guarantee dignity, freedom, and justice for all. This is a need not only of Muslims but of the whole humanity.

Pakistan can play an impressive role in making the 21st century a century of peace and justice. But it requires that our leadership comes out of the shell of personal interests and adopt the way of standing up to the threats and challenges facing the Muslim world and humanity.
