ISLAM'S FIRST ARROW: THE BATTLE OF BADR AS A DECISIVE BATTLE
IN ISLAMIC HISTORY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TODAY

BY

MAJOR JOHN K. MARTIN
USAF

A THESIS PROVIDED TO THE FACULTY OF

THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES

FOR COMPLETION OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES

AIR UNIVERSITY

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

JUNE 2011

APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

_____
DR. JAMES D. KIRAS   (Date)

_____
DR. JAMES M. TUCCI   (Date)

DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major John K. Martin was commissioned through the Reserve Officer Training Corps, Oregon State University in 1998. Graduating from Undergraduate Pilot Training in 2000, he went on to fly the KC-135 at Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota. Following a tour in Air Mobility Command as an Intern in the PHOENIX HAWK program, he was selected to cross train and fly the KC-10 at Travis Air Force Base, California. Major Martin is a senior pilot with over 2500 flying hours including combat and combat support during Operations JOINT FORGE, NORTHERN WATCH, NOBLE EAGLE, ENDURING FREEDOM, and IRAQI FREEDOM. He has a bachelor's degree in History from Oregon State University, a master's degree in Military Leadership from American Military University, and a master's degree in Operational Art and Science from the Air Command and Staff College. Major Martin was assigned to the CENTCOM Plans, Policy, and Strategy Directorate. He is married and has six children.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT

This study will seek to explain the Battle of Badr as a decisive event in Islamic history. The thesis draws on the classical theorists in military history and attempts to discover what battle is and the purpose it serves. It seeks to define the mechanism that each theorist understood created decision in battle. A further analysis of modern historians and scholars are looked at in order to apply their criteria to Badr. This thesis provides a review of the events that took place at Badr in 624 in the Hijaz of Saudi Arabia. It details the battle itself, including the actions of the belligerents on either side and some of the tactics employed by both forces. This study shows how militant Islamic terrorist leaders, like Osama bin Laden, Sayyid Qutb, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Ibn Taymiyyah, have used the rhetoric of Badr in their writings and speeches to galvanize people for their cause. The conclusions the author makes is that the Battle of Badr was a decisive battle in Islamic history because it provided immediate and long-term social and political effects. The battle's outcome provided Muhammad immediate legitimacy in the region and provided future radical ideologues with a rhetorical device to further their message. The study concludes with various methods to counter the master narrative that Badr is a part.

CONTENTS

Illustrations

Introduction

Why study something that happened in the seventh century?

The devastating 9/11 attacks surprised the American public despite warnings from Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al Qaeda, some five years prior. The United States intelligence community had been tracking some of the statements and activities of bin Laden and his colleagues for over 10 years, before they formally labeled the organization as "Al Qaeda." Some in the community predicted an attack on United States soil in a National Intelligence Estimate in July 1995.[1] One year later, Osama Bin Laden declared war on America in his first *fatwa*, or religious ruling or scholarly opinion. In this *fatwa* he called on Muslims around the world, but particularly "the people of the two holy mosques" since they "are linked to the history of their predecessors, the Prophet's companions, whom they see as the example to follow and the ideal to uphold in restoring the nation's glory and upholding the will of God."[2] The two holy mosques are a reference to Mecca and Medina, situated in eastern Saudi Arabia and considered the two holiest sites in Islam. Bin Laden was agitated by the presence of American military personnel in Saudi Arabia, considering it as a direct affront to foreign powers occupying Islam's holy land.

Two key phrases stand out in Bin Laden's declaration. The first is his reference to "the people of the two holy mosques" and its significance explained above. The second is in linking the people of the holy mosques with their predecessors, most notably Muhammad and his companions. Why is this important? What was so critical in Islamic history that Bin Laden would find it necessary to reference the companions in declaring war on the United States? Bin Laden continues in his proclamation,

---

[1] The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004), 341.

[2] *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (New York: Verso, 2005), edited by Bruce Lawrence, translated by James Howarth, 21.

encouraging them about their future struggle saying "the[re] is nothing strange about this: Muhammad's companions were young men. And the young men of today are the successor of the early ones. It was the young men who killed this nation's tyrant, Abu Jahl."[3] What is he referencing? Why would he care about "young men" and the "tyrant" Abu Jahl?

As this study will show later, Abu Jahl was a leader of the established government that opposed Muhammad. Bin Laden references past humiliation that was reconciled through the decisive use of force, and a call to action for Muslim young men to be the "agents" of that action. Bin Laden recounts the following story:

> God is great. This is how the young companions behaved. Two young men asking one another about the most important target among the enemy's ranks, namely to kill [*sic*] the tyrant of this nation and the leader of the atheists in Badr, namely Abu-Jahl. 'Abd-al-Rahman Bin-'Awf's role was to tell them about Abu-Jahl's whereabouts. This is the role required from those who have knowledge and experience about the enemy's most vulnerable spots. They are required to guide their sons and brothers to these spots. Then the young men will say what their predecessors said: "By God, if I see him, I will fight with him until the strongest wins." Almighty God said: "But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever [you] find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them...." Young men know that the humiliation inflicted on Muslims through the occupation of their holy sites can only be eliminated through the jihad and explosives. They repeat the poet's words: Humiliation can only be eliminated through bullets and the shedding of blood.[4]

This study will seek to explain the Battle of Badr as a decisive event in Islamic history.[5] It will further show how militant Islamic terrorist

---

[3] Lawrence, *Statements*, 24

[4] Lawrence, *Statements*, 25

[5] The Battle of Badr took place on 16 March 624 (17 Ramadan 2 AH) in a small town off the coast of present-day Saudi Arabia. The city of Badr lies between Mecca and Medina, two of the three most holy cities in Islam.

leaders, like bin Laden, have used the rhetoric of those events in their writings and speeches to galvanize people to their cause.

Methodology

Narratives of decisive battles in Islamic history written from the Western perspective have skewed our understanding of events like the Battle of Badr.[6] For example, much of this rich tradition of military history has been shaped unduly by religious and national perspectives, from the period of Islamic conquest and expansion (632-750 AD), to the struggle over the Holy Land during two centuries of Crusades (1095-1291 AD), and to the "reconquest" and period of Islamic decline and Western imperial expansion (1291-1918 AD). The rise of western interest in Islamic warfare has increased because of the perceived rise in Islamic Fundamentalism in the past century, but Islamic warfare has been around much longer than just the Crusades or the so-called Islamic Fundamentalism and Islamic Globalization of recent years. The modern form of Muslim extremist warfare has been treated mainly as an extension of *jihad*, or holy war because our view of Islamic military history is culturally biased. Very little emphasis is given to the political background and its influence on culture for a particular conflict. Moreover, the vast majority of Islamic warfare in history has been offensive in nature, with few exceptions, because of our inability to comprehend difficult concepts, like *jihad*, that have significant differences in meaning within Islam itself.

All wars are political in nature including those fought under the banner of Islam. Bin Laden couches his movement in religious language and provides a "higher" justification for murder, but that does not mean the purpose is religious. Religion may just be a means to achieve a political end—the recreation of an Islamic state governed according to

---

[6] For an excellent insight that opposes this Western viewpoint on the Crusades, see Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York, New York, Schocken Books, 1984).

true Islamic principles. The Battle of Badr had a political purpose for the nascent Islamic movement led by Muhammad. This purpose was to bring together a loose alliance of tribes, whose only common denominator was their individual loyalty to the Prophet Muhammad and his teachings. He expertly used the opportunity at Badr to weld this fragile coalition into a single confederation of tribes.

More important than any political coalition was Muhammad's ability to appeal to the cultural standards and patterns of behavior of the disparate Arabian people. Muhammad's ability to bring together dissimilar tribes within a greater tribal construct towards political and religious objectives is one of Badr's greatest results. A fascinating aspect of the battle was how Muhammad was able to leverage tribal allegiances in his favor to achieve his political objectives. At Badr, tribes previously aligned with disparate parties come together under Muhammad's leadership, where they otherwise would have shied away.

As important as the cultural and political motives behind the Battle of Badr may be, they pale in comparison to the religious significance and motivations of the early Muslim founders. The religious rhetoric of the battle still resonates today in mosque teachings and children's schooling, and the religious significance of the battle cannot be understated. Since it had such lasting significance, a corresponding understanding of the religious motives must be equally important, if we are to understand why the battle took place. Muhammad was not just seeking political domination over the various tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. He could have accomplished this in any number of ways. What is important to recognize is that he sought to unify them ideologically and change their loyalty from one based on ethnicity and kinship to a social union based on religion. This impact, more than any treaty or economic benefits gained, constitutes Badr's lasting significance. Both the Quran and Hadith have much to say about the battle and understanding and placing these remarks in context ensures

a more useful method of understanding the accuracy of current invocations of the battle by radical ideologues. This helps the strategist devise methods for countering potentially harmful narratives.

This project uses a mix of primary and secondary source material as a means to put the Battle of Badr in its appropriate context. There is a significant gap in the historiography of seventh-century Arabia, both Eastern and Western. Scholarship in English on the battle itself is limited. In many historical works, the Battle of Badr is frequently dealt with as one in a number of events in the life of Muhammad. In other works, the battle is relegated to one case study of many incidents in the broader tapestry of Muslim history or religious jurisprudence. This causes a few research challenges.

Foremost amongst these challenges is source authenticity. Any objective analysis of an event that relates in some form with religious belief ultimately runs into problems of separating fact from fiction due to the prevalence of hagiography. In this regard, the Battle of Badr is no exception. Added to source authenticity is the matter of the number of primary sources on or about the battle. There are too few firsthand accounts of the battle, much less documentation, and many standard accounts of the battle were written long after the events. The Battle of Badr is not unique is this regard; there is a dearth of sources and historiography relating to early Muslim military history, and this limits our ability to know exactly what happened over 1,500 years ago. With this in mind, it is sometimes not as important to know what precisely took place as to know what the effects of what is generally understood to have taken place are. A significant religious event can have implications as a literary device or historical occasion. For example, they contribute to a master narrative, which is a set of stories that are "deeply embedded in a culture, provides a pattern for cultural life and social structure, and

creates a framework for communication about what people are expected to do in certain situations."[7]

Roadmap

This study undertakes the challenge of placing the Battle of Badr as a decisive battle in Islamic history. To this end, Chapter 1 draws on the classical theorists in military history and attempts to discover what battle is and the purpose it serves. Following this discussion will be a review of the literature by military historians to determine the criteria for "decisive" as opposed to ordinary battles. The next step is to review a small number of "decisive" battles, to illustrate those criteria and determine if Badr meets them.

Chapter 2 provides valuable contextual aspects and outlines some critical causal factors leading to Badr. Specifically, it details some of the political intricacies facing Muhammad as he consolidated power at Medina. Furthermore, it will outline some of the critical causes of the battle from a cultural, and religious perspective. It will show how numerous factors contributed to the two sides meeting in battle beyond mere unilateral reasons.

Chapter 3 discusses the Battle of Badr itself with associated religious aftereffects. It attempts to provide a review of the events that took place there. The first part of the chapter will detail the battle itself, including the actions of the belligerents on either side and some of the tactics employed by both forces. The chapter concludes with the immediate aftereffects of the seminal events, including Muhammad's legitimization as a political force in the region. It also highlights seminal Quranic verses relating to the conflict.

The final chapter builds on the understanding of the battle and its context and looks at how Badr has become enshrined as an element of fundamentalist Islamic rhetoric by many terrorist leaders and radical

---

[7] Jeffry R. Halverson, H.L. Goodall, Jr., and Steven R. Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism* (New York, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 7.

Islamic scholars. This section will look for parallels in themes surrounding major events that have linkages to Muhammad's victory. By using Badr as a rhetorical device, radical thinkers can provide a common baseline to energize their constituency towards a greater cause. Many ideologues under investigation, including Ibn Taymiyyah, Sayyid Qutb, Osama bin Laden, and Ayman al-Zawahiri promulgate the importance of the actions of Muhammad and his early followers, and apply these connections to current events. If their rhetoric could be overtly militant, there is no better place to look than the first battle Muhammad took part in to find linkages to current policies. Here, we can glean insights into how these leaders are invoking the Battle of Badr and find out what they are hoping to achieve by using it.

The study will conclude with an assessment of the claim that the Battle of Badr was, in fact, a decisive battle in Islamic and world history. It will further show how radical terrorist organizations can twist the events that took place over 1,500 years ago to suit their needs. But more than that, by discovering more about the events and surrounding themes, the strategist can find common ground with allies that share similar cultural values. The strategist can point to these events as potential episodes of peace and baselines for future cooperation. The hope is to find realities for peace, rather than rhetoric for war.

This paper will provide analysis on the events which took place before the Battle of Badr to include political, cultural, and religious ideas which may provide some causal factors to the conflict. Furthermore, it will also look at the actual battle itself. The Battle of Badr in 624 was the first offensive military operation in Islamic history and fused political, religious, and cultural ideologies in a military engagement. This confluence of factors, combined with the opportunity of battle, provided the launching point for Islam to establish itself as a world religion and a political entity reaching across three continents.

Chapter 1

Decisive Battle

But even at this point we must not fail to emphasize that the violent resolution of the crisis, the wish to annihilate the enemy's forces, is the firstborn son of war.

—Carl von Clausewitz

For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.

—Sun Tzu

It may justly be reckoned among those few battles of which a contrary event would have essentially varied the drama of the world in all its subsequent scenes[1]

—Henry Hallam

The Battle of Badr was a decisive battle in Islamic history, one that has and continues to be invoked by a number of radical Islamic extremists to further their cause. But what exactly made this battle so decisive? Is it the fact that Badr had lasting social, political, and religious significance for Islam in its earliest days? Why does Badr continue to have deep cultural value for many Muslims—is this what makes it decisive? This chapter seeks to better understand what constitutes decisive battle in the first place.

To reach this understanding, this chapter is divided into two parts that reflect the key ingredients of decisive battle. These ingredients are: a mechanism for decision and a construct for declaring it decisive. The first section of this chapter looks at various war theorists to see how they characterized the mechanism for decision. Theorists such as Carl von

---

[1] Quoted in Edward S. Creasy, *Fifteen Battles of the World: From Marathon to Waterloo* (New York, New York: Da Capo Press, 1851), viii.

Clausewitz, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and Sun Tzu had very different ideas on the necessary and sufficient requirements for ending a conflict decisively. This chapter focuses on the required mechanism to bring an enemy to a decision then the second part of the chapter seeks to evaluate whether a battle is decisive or not. This second part will analyze why historians have decided to call certain battles decisive while discounting others. By looking at their various criteria, a synthesis of their standards of measure will help determine why Badr was a decisive battle.

Military Theorists and Decision Mechanisms

The epigram by Clausewitz above epitomizes one interpretation for mechanisms that produce decision in battle. The era in which Clausewitz lived was considered one of sweeping military change. Russell Weigley calls this "quintessentially the age of battles" and it was the "grand-scale battle as the principle instrument of the military strategist, the focus of all his efforts to attain decision in war."[2] Clearly, Clausewitz's writings exemplify this age. He places the enemy's fielded forces as the primary mechanism for affecting a decision. Therefore, to create decisive effects, the fielded forces must be defeated to achieve your objectives.

It must be made clear that Clausewitz is often misunderstood and his writings, particularly those on battle, have been taken out of context. The great Prussian theorist wrote about the dialectical components of war, the abstract and actual practice. He recognized the latter while attempting to create a theory on war based on the abstract and conceptual. Later generations would read and mis-read *On War.* In many cases, strategists and generals attempted to apply Clausewitz's focus on battle as justification for being "the central military act" with the object being the "destruction or defeat of the enemy" forces as an end in

---

[2] Russell Frank Weigley, *The Age of Battles: The Quest for Decisive Warfare from Breitenfeld to Waterloo* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), xi.

and of itself.[3] The central military act of annihilating the enemy was desirable, in theory, but rarely achievable in practice, for a wide variety of reasons. Clausewitz understood and articulated a number of these reasons. For example, chance and friction often prevented battle from achieving decision in one single blow.

Perhaps it was the age he was writing in, and the relative dearth of options available to the military strategist, that led so many people to confuse his theory for what it really is.[4] Statements such as "the destruction of his forces, whether by death, injury, or any other means" certainly fit well with the success Napoleon had on the battlefield.[5] World War I generals extrapolated these statements to produce the horrors of Verdun. They would erroneously conclude that the only way to effect decision was through destruction. Weigley contends that this sort of erroneous conclusion by future strategists, after reading Clausewitz, produced an age where battles did not possess a "satisfactory power of decision."[6] Colin Gray takes exception to Wiegley's conclusions and places blame on the subsequent actions, not the battle itself. He states that "battlefield achievement is squandered by incompetence in peacemaking" and not in the battle.[7]

Writing at about the same time and under similar contextual factors was the Baron Antoine-Henri de Jomini. Jomini was an eyewitness to many of the same battles Clausewitz wrote about, and

---

[3] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds. and trans., (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 227.

[4] Prior to Clausewitz, little thought was given to the theory of war and *On War* is generally regarded as one of the first attempts to do so.

[5] Clausewitz, 227. Generals and strategists after Napoleon continued to seek "cookbook" answers to their tough questions about war. They saw Napoleon's great battlefield success and tried to find a prescriptive approach to emulate his achievements.

[6] Weigley, xiii. Weigly contends that battle, by itself, was not sufficient to produce the kinds of decision Clausewitz was writing about probably because of the fog and friction inherent in the war's actual conduct.

[7] Colin S. Gray, *Defining and Achieving Decisive Victory* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, April 2002) 7. The better state of peace is an idea Liddell Hart espoused as his decision mechanism, which we will turn to later.

actually served on Napoleon's staff. The Swiss writer had a somewhat larger following in most military circles, ostensibly due to his prescriptive approach to war's problems. Jomini's audience was continually searching for the magic potion Napoleon so easily concocted in his brilliant campaigns. American, British, and Russian generals wanted to harness Napoleon's brilliance and transcribe his patterns for their own service doctrines.[8]

Jomini did not disappoint their insatiable appetite and provided a scientific, almost mathematical, approach for providing decision in battle. Jomini does not discount the importance of battles and calls them the "actual conflicts of armies contending about great questions of national policy and strategy."[9] However, he directly contradicts Clausewitz's notion of battles as the "chief and deciding features of war," instead saying the outcome "generally depend upon a union of causes which are not always within the scope of the military art."[10] Jomini's prescription for success lies in strategic positioning of forces at the decisive point.

Jominian prescriptions to achieve decision, which boiled down to maneuvering along strategic lines and to specific points, became a staple in many cadet and war college courses of instruction. For example, a number of generals in the American Civil War drew upon this instruction and sought to employ a prescription for success. Jomini defined these points as either having secondary importance or those "whose importance is constant and immense."[11] The latter he termed "decisive strategic points" and were "those which are capable of exercising a marked influence either upon the result of the campaign or upon a single

---

[8] See, for example John Shy, "Jomini" in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age,* edited by Peter Paret (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 143-186.

[9] Baron Antoine-Henri de Jomini, *The Art of War*, translated by Captain G.H. Mendell and Lt. W.P. Craighill (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 2007), 162.

[10] Jomini, 162.

[11] Jomini, 77.

enterprise."[12] For Jomini, it did not matter much if the armies ever met in battle either accidentally or purposely. For him, and many subsequent devotees to his ideas, placing the army along geographical or objective points of maneuver would be enough to affect a decision. Jomini calls this vital to Napoleon's genius, because he was able to do this in almost all of his campaigns. It was the general's exceptional ability to maneuver along these points in order to "dislodge and destroy the hostile army."[13]

While Clausewitz saw the destruction of the enemy fielded forces as the mechanism for decision, Jomini took the concept a step farther back and emphasized the maneuver along decisive points to affect the decision. Writing in the period between World War I and World War II, and after the horrific battles in the European trenches, the Russian Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevskii fused the two concepts together to provide a method of operational dislocation of the enemy's lines of communication as a decision mechanism. Tukhachevskii sought to transform the theory of warfare from the stagnant broad front of World War I towards a deep battle concept. This encouraged Jomini's theory of maneuver while emphasizing Clausewitz's destruction of the enemy beyond the front lines and towards the enemy's means of resistance: the sustainment of forces and the lines of communication. Tukhachevskii's genius is in the emphasis of the interaction between the shock troops on the front lines along the broad front (Clausewitz) and the simultaneity of maneuver over "the greatest possible contact area" along decisive geographical or maneuvering points (Jomini).[14]

---

[12] Jomini, 78.

[13] Jomini, 81.

[14] Richard Simpkin, *Deep Battle: The Brainchild of Marshal Tukhachevskii* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1987), 34. Tukhachevskii further states that the "Red Army's warlike actions are to be aimed at annihilation of the enemy. The achievement of decisive victory and the complete rout of the enemy will be the main aims of the Soviet Union in any conflict forced upon her. The only way to do this is by fighting. Battle will bring about: (a) annihilation of the enemy's human and material resources

Basil Liddell Hart, another interwar theorist, focused on operational dislocation too, but he was determined to *maneuver* for decision in order to provide a better state of peace. In a survey of 25 centuries worth of military history, his primary method was through the indirect approach. His thoughts coincided with Tukhachevskii in that maneuver was required to throw the enemy off balance to achieve decision by "exploiting the elements of movement and surprise."[15] The movement and maneuver of forces was akin to the Russian concept of simultaneity, and the surprise was critical to producing psychological dislocation of the enemy. For Liddell Hart, the two were inextricably linked, and if the *aim* of strategy was to conduct battle under the most advantageous circumstances, then the *perfection* of strategy was "to produce a decision without any serious fighting."[16] Liddell Hart's ultimate objective was a better state of peace, accomplished primarily through the lines of least resistance in the physical realm and the lines of least expectation in the psychological. For Liddell Hart, "only when both are combined is the strategy truly an indirect approach, calculated to dislocate the opponent's balance" in order to produce decisive results.[17]

Methods and mechanisms for decision are not limited to continental theorists. On the sea, Sir Julian Corbett and Alfred Thayer Mahan have distinctive ideas on what they believe constitutes the most effective means of decision in war. The American naval theorist Mahan undoubtedly subscribed to Clausewitz's mechanism as destruction of the fielded forces. He transcribed that target to the sea and the enemy's fleet. For him, "in most military situations, or problems, there is some

---

(b) the breaking of his morale and ability to resist. Every battle, offensive and defensive alike, has as its primary aim the defeat of the enemy. But only an all-out attack on the *primary* axis, leading into a relentless *pursuit*, will achieve annihilation of the enemy's forces and resources." Simpkin, 177. Emphasis added.

[15] B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1954), 323.

[16] Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 324. Emphasis added.

[17] Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 338, 327.

one leading feature, so far primary, that, amid many important details, it affords a central idea upon which concentration of purpose and dispositions may fasten, and so obtain unity of design."[18] He does not denigrate the importance of Tukhachevskii's concept of maneuver or Jomini's theme of decisive points, but they are simply important means towards the ultimate objective, that being the "organized military force of the enemy."[19] He makes the point more explicit when remarking that accomplishing the "great feature of the task by getting hold of the most decisive position, further effort must be directed" to "destroy or shut up his fleet."[20]

   Corbett approached his study of war holistically. He understood that "naval strategy is not a thing by itself" and had its place in being "intimately connected" with armies on the shore.[21] Perhaps this is why he devalued the Clausewitzian theoretical notion of destroying the fielded forces—in this case the enemy's fleet—as the primary mechanism for decision in warfare. While Clausewitz saw the concentration of forces at the decisive point, Corbett understood this to be a paradoxical flaw or a "kind of shibboleth" in naval doctrine.[22] Corbett advocated a fleet in being that could maintain its integrity and presence anywhere while avoiding direct confrontation. By concentrating naval forces, it would negate this inherent advantage upon the sea and necessitate the one thing impossible for this type of strategy: securing command of the sea. Corbett's mechanism for decision lay in his concept of dispersion, reach,

---

[18] Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Strategy: Selections From the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan*, ed. by John B. Hattendorf (Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute Press, 1991), 99.

[19] Mahan, 231. See also 105-176 for the importance of decisive points, positioning, and maneuver to place the fleet in the proper location to make decision necessary.

[20] Mahan, 250.

[21] Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1911), 11. See also Michael I. Handel, "Corbett, Clausewitz, and Sun Tzu" in *Naval War College Review*, Autumn, 2000. Downloaded from http://www.nwc.navy.mil/press/Review/2000/autumn/art7-a00.htm accessed 15 March 2011.

[22] Corbett, 134.

and a "process of exhaustion."[23] His disdain for declaring "crude maxims" about primary objectives and destroying the enemy's army or fleet probably stems from his understanding that "since men live upon the land and not upon the sea, great issues between nations at war have always been decided—except in the rarest cases—either by what your army can do against your enemy's territory and national life, or else by the *fear* of what the fleet makes *possible* for your army to do."[24]

Similar to their naval brethren, air theorists have come up with their own means for decision. The Italian air theorist Giulio Douhet advocated striking critical vulnerabilities while avoiding the enemy's strength in order to achieve political collapse. For him, air power made it possible to break through the fortified lines of defense and the broad front envisioned by Tukhachevskii. Where the Russians and Germans saw simultaneity as the key to operational success, Douhet said that "victory smiles upon those who anticipate the changes in the character of war, not upon those who wait to adapt themselves after the changes occur."[25] These changes were derived from the primary necessity of gaining and maintaining command of the air, in order to destroy the enemy air forces wherever they are found, be it in combat, bases, production centers, and even the civilian manufacturers.[26] In other words, "no longer can a line of demarcation be drawn between belligerents and nonbelligerents, because all citizens wherever they are can be victims of an enemy offensive."[27] This line of reasoning led Douhet, and others like Sir John C. Slessor, to posit that the mechanism for decision now transcended land and sea warfare into the realm of

---

[23] Corbett, 16.

[24] Corbett, 16. Emphasis added.

[25] Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, translated by Dino Ferrari, edited by Joseph Patrick Harahan and Richard H. Kohn (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1942), 30.

[26] Douhet, 31.

[27] Douhet, 179.

flight. By doing this, air forces could now avoid enemy strongholds. Air power then becomes "only one, but it is the most decisive one" in deciding the outcome of future wars.[28]

Irregular war theorists, too, have their unique place in the discussion of decision mechanisms. For many of them, population control is central to affecting a decision. Che Guevara understood the importance of population control in his idea of *focoism*. In fact, "to carry out this type of war without the population's support is the prelude to inevitable disaster."[29] Guevara wanted to initiate violence at the local level through the population. He felt that would be enough to spark revolutionary attitudes in order to overthrow the government. Similarly, Mao Tse-Tung was opposed to fielded forces as the mechanism for decision. They are an "important factor in war, but not the decisive factor; it is people, not things, that are decisive" and it is a "contest of human power and morale" that will decide the matter.[30]

If the destruction of fielded forces, as advocated by Clausewitz, is at one end of the decision mechanism spectrum with maneuver, critical vulnerabilities, and population maintaining places along that continuum, Sun Tzu occupies the other end with his advocacy to gain decision without fighting at all. Not only is "all warfare based on deception," but it is critical to Sun Tzu's mechanism for decision to "create situations which will contribute" in order to "control the balance" of the battle.[31] In other words, the mechanism for Sun Tzu was political maneuvering to place the nation in the superior position rather than risking all in a

---

[28] John C. Slessor, *Air Power and Armies* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 214.

[29] Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 148.

[30] Mao Tse-Tung, *On the Protracted War* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1960), 217.

[31] Sun Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War*, translated by Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 96.

battle that may not be fought on your own terms.[32] Sun Tzu's third
priority is to attack the army directly, preferring to take the enemy cities
and armies intact.

Finally, and germane to the discussion on Badr in this thesis, is
one viewpoint on the Islamic idea of decision from a Muslim theorist.[33]
The Pakistani Brigadier S.K. Malik studied concepts from the Quran in
attempting to discover a "Quranic Concept of War."[34] Malik understands
Liddell Hart's philosophy of psychological dislocation, but says it is
temporary. According to Malik, "spiritual dislocation is permanent" and
that is the essential ingredient to effecting decision.[35] Furthermore, the
way to enact spiritual dislocation is through terror. Malik explains that
"terror struck into the hearts of the enemies is not only a means, it is the
end in itself. Once a condition of terror into the opponent's heart is
obtained, hardly anything is left to be achieved. It is the point where the

---

[32] Furthermore, Sun Tzu says "to capture the enemy's army is better than to destroy it"
and "what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy." Sun Tzu,
115.

[33] It would be impossible to bring forth a discussion on a "western" or "eastern" way of
war within the scope of this study. While this may be useful to delineate some
differences between concepts of battle, time, or type of war it does not necessarily help
define what is considered a decisive battle or what the mechanism for decision is. For
example, Victor Davis Hanson's *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of
Western Power* (New York, NY: Random House, 2001) argues that the west's supremacy
in battle has led to the dominance of western civilization throughout history. John
Keegan's *A History of Warfare* (New York, NY: Random House, 1993) says that "it was
Islam itself, which lays so heavy an emphasis on the fight for the faith, that made them
so formidable in the field." See Keegan, 196. John A. Lynn's *Battle: A History of
Combat and Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2003) ties the influence culture
has on battle. Samuel P. Huntington's thesis in *The Clash of Civilizations and the
Remaking of World Order* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1996) insists this
division has been there all along and the post Cold War environment will revert to
clashes along cultural lines. John L. Espisito's *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) refutes Huntington. Finally, Russel Weigly's
American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy
(Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977) argues that American's have looked
for total annihilation in their wars and battles throughout history. Max Boot's *Savage
Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York, NY: Basic Books,
2003) offers the opposing view to Weigley.

[34] Brigadier S.K. Malik, *The Quranic Concept of War* (Karachi, Pakistan: Associated
Printers and Publishers Ltd, 1979).

[35] Malik, 60. "Psychological and physical dislocation is, at best, a means, though, by
no means, conclusive for striking terror into the hearts of the enemies."

means and the end meet and merge. Terror is not a means of imposing decision upon the enemy; it is *the decision* we wish to impose upon him."[36]

What of the future? Will technological advances lead to reduced decisiveness in battles?   Does Alfred Tedder's statement, "War is no longer a series of battles" appear more correct in the information age of cyber and space warfare?[37] Or does nuclear warfare present such an existential threat to all nations that nations do not want, as Thomas Schelling argues, victory from their military but the "influence that resides in latent force" it provides?[38] Cyber theorist Martin Libicki tells us that the mechanism for decision in the cyber domain will be societal breakdown of the connected network.   He posits that by attacking the information used by humans, this can affect the decisions made by nations.[39] This is very similar to Corbett's idea of limited war, in that people do not necessarily reside in the cyber domain, much as they do not live on water. Both naval and cyber decision mechanisms make it possible to effect decisive engagements in other realms.

Colin Gray most vehemently disagrees with Tedder's assertion that battles are no longer decisive. In fact, he offers a framework for which to transition to a discussion of decisive battles as devised by various military historians. For him, decisive victories are hard to translate into political effect.[40] This is a notion Clausewitz himself wrestled with, and is why the destruction of the fielded forces is required only in absolute forms of war. In reality, war must conform to political discourse.

---

[36] Malik, 59. Emphasis in original.

[37] Alfred W. Tedder, *Air Power in War* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 13.

[38] Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 31.

[39] Martin C. Libicki, *Conquest in Cyberspace: National Security and Information Warfare* (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 10.

[40] Gray's notion of turning a decisive engagement into political effects may highlight the difficulties of achieving strategic decisiveness, as opposed to the tactical or operational decisiveness argued in this thesis.

Second, decision must take place within an acceptable range of alternatives. As Gray points out, Germany's victory over France in 1940 cannot be seen as decisive within the spectrum of the entire conflict, but it was decisive against a particular enemy. Finally, degrees of decision have to be acceptable to the party defining it. If it is good enough or *decisive* enough merely to continue operations, then the outcome should be considered a decisive event.[41] Gray's lasting contribution to this discussion lies in the identification of different levels of decisiveness including operational, strategic, and political levels.[42]

Decisive Battles in Military History

This chapter now moves from decision mechanisms of battle, according to military theory, to what scholars consider decisive battle. This part of the chapter will look at how various military historians have categorized decisive battles throughout military history. Specifically, it will look for trends and points of analysis for critical factors each have used to classify a particular battle as decisive.

The point of departure in this genre of military history is Edward S. Creasy's *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World: From Marathon to Waterloo,* published in 1851. Some of Creasy's battles include Syracuse in 413 B.C., Tours in 732 A.D., Hastings in 1066, Blenheim in 1704, and Saratoga in 1777. He provides a short narrative of each battle with a synopsis of events covering the historical period between the decisive engagements. Since his groundbreaking study, historians have

---

[41] Gray, *Defining and Achieving Decisive Victory*, 18-20. Gray provides three propositions regarding the decisiveness of a particular event. The first is quoted above and has to do with turning the battlefield decision into strategic effects. The second deals with a "range of possibilities" since the enemy may still have some alternatives to continue resisting. The third has to do with degrees of decisiveness based on the limited objectives set by policy. For example, decision against terrorists is possible, but not necessarily the same kind of victory against a conventional army.

[42] Gray, *Defining and Achieving Decisive Victory*, 11.

essentially used his framework and qualifications with few exceptions.[43]
Creasy's legacy was probably established simply because he was the *first*
to compile a critical list of decisive engagements along with criteria for
selecting various battles.

Creasy established three criteria when selecting his 15 battles: 1)
The moral worth of the combatants and their "undeniable greatness in
the disciplined courage, and in the love of honor, which makes the[m]
confront agony and destruction;[44] 2) the battle must produce enduring
importance and practical influence on current conditions; and 3) the
battles, had a different outcome taken place, have lasting impact on
future generations.[45] The method he uses to evaluate the battles based
on this criteria is relatively straightforward. He investigates the chain of
causes and effects, while speculating on what might have been if a
different outcome took place.

These were the positive factors he used as criteria, but he also
applied some negative tests in order to narrow the field. He discounts
the number killed and wounded as a requirement for greatness, while
also neglecting total numbers engaged. He also does not include those of
"mere secondary rank" where the effects were either limited in area or
"confirmed some great tendency or bias which an earlier battle had
originated."[46] Other works have discounted certain battles due to the
relative lack of sources available. Some historians have discounted Badr
for this reason. They have made a mistake by eliminating it when it

---

[43] I have surveyed over 20 works in this genre with varying titles including the words
"Decisive, Critical, Changed, Crucial, and Great." A full list of works consulted can be
found in the bibliography.

[44] Quoted in Edward S. Creasy, *Fifteen Battles of the World: From Marathon to Waterloo*
(New York, New York: Da Capo Press, 1851), vii.

[45] Creasy, viii.

[46] Creasy, ix. The great battles between the Greeks and Persians *after* Marathon fit this
latter category as "not to have been phenomena of primary impulse." This discounts
grand battles such as Salamis and Plataea that others have included in their decisive
battle lists.

created such lasting social and political change, as this paper's analysis will show.[47]

Most of the scholarship on decisive battles agrees with Creasy, but there are some notable exceptions. Some use decisive battles as data points for proving their overall war theories. Liddell Hart builds his case for an indecisive approach to victory cited earlier after surveying his concept of decisive battles in history. He says "if a certain effect is seen to follow a certain cause in a score or more cases . . . there is ground for regarding this cause as an integral part of any theory of war."[48] Other authors attempt to provide battle narratives while discussing the basic who, what, why, when, how, and where of each battle they chose arbitrarily.[49] Still others choose their conflicts based on how they have influenced or significantly changed the conduct of warfare through technological or tactical advancements.[50]

The most significant departure from Creasy's criteria is from Paul Davis, writing almost a century later in 1999. Since he had almost 100 more years to choose from, Davis included an additional 85 battles to his list and picked them based off the following reasons: 1) The outcome brought on major political or social change; 2) if the outcome were reversed, major political or social change would have taken place; and 3) the battle introduced major changes in warfare doctrine or tactics.[51] Davis combines Creasy's best notion, in looking at the consequences of

---

[47] See for example, Jeremy Black, editor, *70 Great Battles in History* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd, 2005) and J.F.C. Fuller, *The Decisive Battles of the Western World and Their Influence Upon History*, 3 volumes (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1954).

[48] Liddell Hart, *The Decisive Wars of History*, 3 volumes (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd, 1929), 5. He certainly agrees with the cause and effect methodology employed by Creasy, but his purpose for choosing battles ties in with his book on strategy cited earlier.

[49] See for example Bryan Perrett, *The Battle Book: Crucial Conflicts in History from 1469 BC to the Present* (London: Arms and Armor Press, 1992) and Richard Humble, *Famous Land Battles: From Agincourt to the 6-Day War* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co, 1979).

[50] See for example Black, *70 Decisive Battles in History* and Walter Markov, editor, *Battles of World History* (New York, New York: Hippocrene Books, 1979).

[51] Paul K. Davis, *100 Decisive Battles: From Ancient Times to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Press, 1999), xi.

what might have happened with a different outcome, and the best of other authors, in discovering significant military changes.

The Mechanism and Definition of Decisive Battle

Clausewitz provides the best mechanism for decision, when he cites battle as the means of destruction of the opponent's fielded forces to create a decision. However, there is still disagreement on how each theorist views battle as a means to achieve decision. The other theorists dance around the absolute theory of war in *On War*. War is a violent action and the mechanism for decision must naturally follow from that violent act. There may be better *means* to get to that decision and each theorist discussed above offers excellent examples on such methods. It seems too idealistic, however, to take Sun Tzu's political dislocation for granted, thinking that decision is accomplished by simple rhetoric. This criteria is important to keep in mind during the discussion of Badr in Chapters Two and Three.

Creasy was right in his requirements for a decisive battle. A decisive battle must, by simple definition, *decide* something. The best way to determine that is to look at what caused the battle in the first place and trace its effects to current and future events. However, one can also take a portion of Davis' explanation and look at the political and social change the battle caused. A further criterion to assess Badr's decisiveness is through Gray's criteria of operational, strategic, and political decision. Therefore, the mechanism to trigger decision in battle is the destruction of the opponents fielded forces. A decisive battle is where significant political and social change takes place, affecting current and future people. The battle can have operational, strategic, or political decisiveness while contributing to an overall campaign or war.[52] With these definitions in place, the next two chapters turn to the Battle

---

[52] This will provide the criteria for evaluating whether Badr was decisive or not. It must have significant social and political change on the current and future environments. It must also have political, strategic, and operational levels of decisiveness. As the rest of the study will show, Badr satisfies all of these requirements.

of Badr to include the significant causes, actual events, and subsequent consequences.

Chapter 2

Badr: Context & Causes

And fight with them until there is no more persecution and religion should be only for Allah . . . **8:39**

When your Lord revealed to the angels: I am with you, therefore make firm those who believe. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them. **8:12**

The previous chapter established the criteria and mechanisms for decisive battle. This chapter turns toward the Battle of Badr and explores the critical events that preceded it. The first section of the chapter explains the context of the battle, including the region's geography and Muhammad's rise as a religious figure. The second section of the chapter looks at some of the influences that caused the two armies in the battle to meet. In particular, this chapter identifies the thematic elements, both cultural and political, that played a significant causal role in the conflict.

Badr in Context

The world political landscape during Muhammad's rise to power, and the Battle of Badr, was dominated on one hand by the Roman Empire in the west and the Persian Empire in the east. The ongoing power struggle between the Byzantines and the Persians may have had little impact on the daily activities of the average Arabian. Seventh century A.D. Arabia, however, provided the perfect breeding ground for Muhammad to begin his ministry because of the clashes taking place there. Many Arabs were serving in the various wars or caught in the middle as the pivot to the world's primary trade routes. Muhammad most certainly "grew to maturity in a world in which high finance and international politics were inextricably mixed up."[1]

---

[1] W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1953), 16.

Muhammad's ministry began with his own family. In fact, if Muhammad's preachings had been more widely and quickly received outside of his immediate family, battles such as Badr might have been unnecessary. Indeed, the Quran discusses Badr in this manner, "had you believed in God and what we sent down to our servant on the day of decision, the day on which the two parties met," the battle may not have needed to even take place.[2] The "two parties" refers to the different armies that clashed at Badr and suggest that Muhammad was already receiving plans of conquest.

According to biographer Ibn Ishaq, one of the first reported converts to Islam was Khadija, Muhammad's cousin who called him "son of my uncle" and who would eventually become his wife.[3] She was regarded as a very powerful woman and "of the greatest dignity" among the Quraysh, one of the most prominent Meccan tribes.[4] Muhammad would begin to convert the immediate members of his family first, while attempting to consolidate his power within the powerful Quraysh tribe. The marriage to Khadija provided Muhammad the legitimacy he needed within the tribe.

Islam would gain some momentum amongst the Meccans. But it would lose some steam as Muhammad met strong resistance while attempting to establish his following among a diverse tribal groups. At this point, the ministry transition from Mecca to Medina began. This transitional emigration, or *hijra*, denotes a critical period in the Islamic faith. In fact, Muslims base their calendar on Muhammad's subsequent shift from one locale to the other. This transition begs the question, why

---

[2] All Quran passages are taken from "The Noble Quran," Muslim Students Association, University of Southern California, found at http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran. All passages are hereafter cited as Quran, followed by the *sura,* or verse number. Quran, 8:41

[3] Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Life of Muhammad.* Translated by Alfred Guillaume. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 82, 111.

[4] Ishaq, 82, 111.

did he have to leave Mecca for Medina? Bell surmises that the wealthier Christian lands nearby provided inspiration for Arabs towards a better way of life. He further supposes that the residents of Mecca may have felt content to profit from its relative heightened importance with regard to religion.[5] Perhaps they wanted to hold on to their customary rituals, while the people of Medina were more open to seeing their current religion falter. This latter view may have merit with the adaptation of the Ka'bah as the center of Muslim worship, which was originally a Medinian pagan ritual. Either way, without Muhammad's "adroit use of the influence which came to him and the military force which he built upon it, the Arabs would not have been united under the banner of Islam. . ."[6]

Medina, or Yathrib as it was known before Muhammad's *hijra*, was under the control of the Ansar tribe, with power divided amongst two main sub-tribes, the Aws and Khazraj. The two groups, just prior to the *hijra*, restored an uneasy political balance through the "so-called war of Hatib."[7] This was the culmination of years of frequent feuds with one another. According to Montgomery Watt, regarded as the leading modern biographer and scholar on Muhammad, Medina was experiencing many similar problems that afflicted Mecca at the time, which was the "incompatibility of nomadic standards and customs—in fine, nomadic ideology—with life in a settled community."[8]   It was, perhaps, this incompatibility and constant lack of unity which made Medina the perfect location for Muhammad to consolidate his power in the approximately two years before Badr.

Watt provides another view of Muhammad's emigration to Medina. 'Urwah, an early companion of Muhammad, suggested three reasons for the emigration in a letter. First, the denunciation of worshipping idols

---

[5] Richard Bell, *Introduction to the Quran* (London: Edinburgh University Press, 1953), 27-28.

[6] Bell, *Introduction to the Quran,* 28.

[7] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca,* 142.

[8] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca,* 142.

and attacking polytheism "marked the critical stage in the relation of Muhammad to the leaders of Quraysh"[9]   Second, this opposition sparked high-ranking Quraysh members to rebuke him and ostracize Muhammad within his own tribe. This led to the third reason, Muhammad's insistence that many of the early Muslims should go to Abyssinia and await further instructions there. This action did nothing but infuriate the Meccan leadership even more and preceded Talib's remarks to the Abyssinian Negus quoted above.

Muhammad's original teachings were founded on the concept of a single God, which were in direct contrast to the dominant religion then being practiced in Mecca. Throughout the Quran and other writings, Muhammad's distaste for the polytheists and his relative benevolence towards fellow monotheists and those who were called "people of the book" is evident. These people of the book include Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. According to Muhammad, these latter groups could all be part of God's people, if they would only follow God's teaching as revealed through his newest prophet. The intent was for a religious awakening among God's people and a turn away from the dark ages. The pre-Islamic period was one of "cruelty, barbarism, and anarchy that Islam wished to associate with Arabia before the coming of Muhammad and the Quran."[10]

This earlier form of ignorance, or *jahiliyya,* is better stated by an early follower of Muhammad, Ja'far b. Abu Talib, who is responding to critics of his religion after his decision to leave Mecca for Assyria in the face of continued oppression by the Quraysh:

> O King, we were an uncivilized people, worshipping idols,
> eating corpses, committing abominations, breaking
> natural ties, treating guests badly, and our strong

---

[9] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 107.

[10] Rueven Firestone, *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 40.

devoured our weak. Thus we were until God sent us an apostle whose lineage, truth, trustworthiness, and clemency we know. He summoned us to acknowledge God's unity and to worship him and to renounce the stones and images which we and our fathers formerly worshipped. He commanded us to speak the truth, be faithful to our engagements, mindful of the ties of kinship and kindly hospitality, and to refrain from crimes and bloodshed . . . Thereupon our people attacked us, treated us harshly and seduced us from our faith to try to make us go back to the worship of idols instead of the worship of God, and to regard as lawful the evil deeds we once committed. So when they got the better of us, treated us unjustly and circumscribed our lives, and came between us and our religion, we came to your country . . .[11]

There are many themes within this discourse that will be discussed later, but several outline Muhammad's early message. These include the recognition of their uncivilized ways, the worship of a single God, the necessity of keeping kinship ties, and finally the notion that their behavior was in self defense because of how "our people" had "attacked us" and "treated us harshly."

Christianity and Judaism probably had significant influence on Muhammad since, even as their moniker "people of the book" implies, he was illiterate and probably never read the Scriptures or the Torah. However, the nomadic lifestyle and oral traditions of the times most likely put him into frequent contact with these religions. Some scholars conjecture that these theologies would have significant influence on his own teaching.[12] Indeed, Muhammad's historical context is critical in understanding the "inflexib[ility] of purpose" of his views and yet his willingness to be "diplomatic almost to the verge of dishonesty" to the "establishment of the worship of the One God in Medinah and all

---

[11] Ishaq, 151-152

[12] See Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment* (London: MacMillan and Co, 1926).

Arabia."[13] Muhammad's inclusion of these similar religions would be foundational to the eventual concept of Islamic warfare discussed in the next section of this chapter. On one hand he was inflexible towards the polytheists of the established religions yet his attitude towards monotheists was vastly different. Those among his first converts, however, outside of his wife Khadija can be categorized into three classes. The first were younger sons of the best families in Mecca, like Khadija, who were closely related to people who could wield great power within their respective tribes. Second were younger men from other families of weaker clans who were drawn to the Muslim message possibly for economic motivations. The third group included men outside of the clan system, and therefore not directly affiliated with any particular confederacy or alliance.[14] Early on we can already see a direct relationship between economic, political, and tribal influences in following Muhammad's religion.

The geographical context of the area is also important to understand Badr. First, a quick survey on Arabia and the lifestyle that it produced in the seventh century is followed by an explanation on the corresponding importance of Mecca and Medina to the early Islamic faith. Then a look at the various trade routes Muhammad may have been in contact with sets the stage for a better appreciation of the causal factors surrounding the Battle of Badr.

---

[13] Richard Bell, *Introduction to the Quran*, 27.
[14] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 95-96.
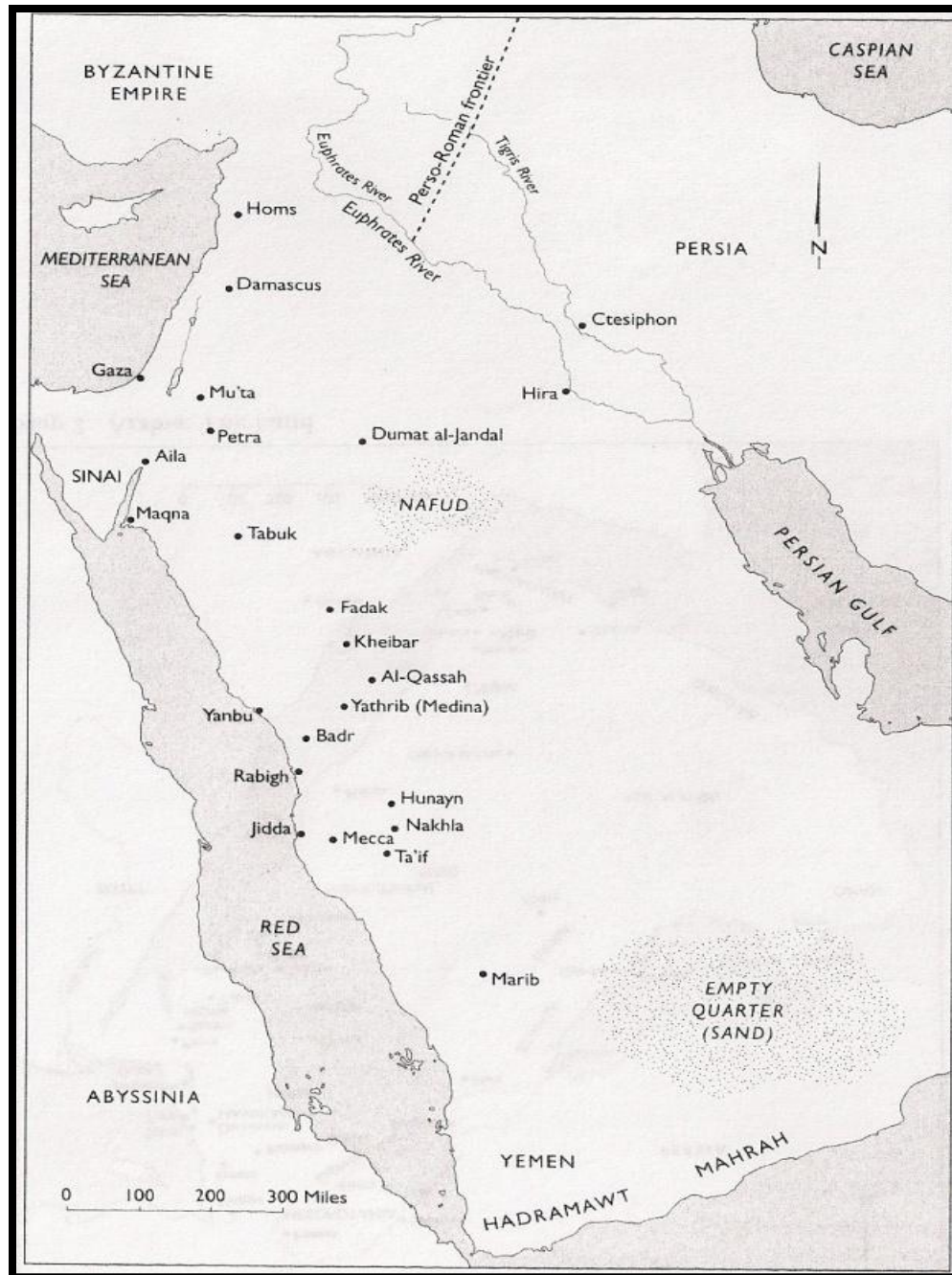
Figure 1. The Arabian Peninsula during Muhammad's time

Source: Richard A. Gabriel, *Muhammad: Islam's First Great General* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 2.

The Middle East is often referred to as the "cradle of civilization."[15] Images in the popular mind of a vast desert with numerous nomadic groups riding on the backs of camels are common. Even with its wide expanse, however, this region had significant influence in world affairs. The Middle East is the proverbial bridge that provides the cross-roads of major trade routes between the two regions. Supposedly invented by the American naval historian Alfred Thayer Mahan, the term "the Middle East" was originally used to distinguish the area between Arabia and India.[16] Eventually, it was used to include the Arabian Peninsula and the region in general.[17]

The area in question is divided into two categories.[18] The first is the waterless land in summer time that produces lush vegetation for camels after a heavy rainfall. People in this region are heavily dependent, more so than usual, on the camel for the "moisture as well as for sustenance" it provides during the extended dry seasons.[19] The second region is one that provides perennial trees and shrubs where camels can graze and major crops can be raised on a relatively consistent basis. Here, people are dependent on systems of wells where camels and humans alike can drink and store water for later purposes.

The cities of Mecca and Medina are described as "islands in a sea of desert" and were regarded by Watt as economic centers of trade on the peninsula. Mecca belonged to the first desert category and was a

---

[15] The literature on Arabian and Middle Eastern geography and its subsequent influence on economy is, to put it lightly, voluminous. For ease of research and relevance, I have used Watt's consolidation and interpretation in Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 1-4.

[16] Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Retrospect and Prospect: Studies in International Relations Naval and Political* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902), 237.

[17] Bernard Lewis, *The Shaping of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3

[18] The following discussion is based on Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca,* 2. See also Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967) translated by Franz Rosenthal, abridged and edited by N. J. Dawood. See especially 91-122 on the Bedouin lifestyle.

[19] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca,* 2.

significant trading location, existing mainly as an economic distribution center with markets and no real product to offer. Medina, conversely, belonged to the second type, and was a "large and flourishing oasis" in Muhammad's time with several Jewish agricultural colonies living among their Arab neighbors.[20]

Trade routes naturally connected the region with the outside world with Medina at the center, and from Yemen to Syria and Abyssinia to Iraq. Medina was where "the nomad came for goods brought from the four points of the compass by caravan."[21]   It became necessary to travel from one part of the desert to another while frequently visiting the larger cities and economic centers to conduct business. Because of this travel, thievery, banditry, and general violence were not uncommon where the stronger herdsmen usually prevailed over the sedentary farmers. Interestingly enough, one of the earliest recorded acts of violence in the region comes from the book of Genesis where Cain, the farmer, kills his brother, the herdsmen, in a classic example of the frailty of border security combined with tribal and familial warfare.[22]

Social instability and geographic opportunity provide some of the contextual background to the Battle of Badr. The next section explores some cultural elements to include tribal allegiances, concepts of warfare, and economic factors which impacted the battle. A background of Islam's role in the region's political affairs is essential in understanding factors leading up to Badr. This includes various pacts and treaties made in the face of overwhelming tribal factions.

Culture and Badr

Muhammad found many obstacles when he consolidated his power and spread his message in Medina. One of the most critical obstacles was the cultural differences inherent to a tribal society of warring

---

[20] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 1-2.
[21] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 3.
[22] Lewis, *The Shaping of the Middle East,* 5-6.

nomads.[23] This section will focus on the influence this culture had on the events leading up to Badr. The features of Arab tribal society that influenced the fighting at Badr will be identified. Among these features are fate and martyrdom, tribal solidarity, and the concept of revenge and honor. It is difficult to draw a distinct line between politics and tribal allegiances in Arabian culture. Great care will be used in differentiating between the two concepts, as politics and tribes are inextricably linked. The political landscape facing Muhammad will be discussed in a later section.

Fate & Martyrdom

The first concept to explore is fate and martyrdom in pre-Islamic Arabia and its relation to Badr. This exploration is not a detailed theological look into the many intricacies of fatalism within Islamic thought. However, the focus will be on the specific influence fate and martyrdom had on the fighting at Badr. Muhammad propagated concepts of fate and martyrdom, linking them together. He used the pre-Islamic concept of fate as an idea to exploit through religious martyrdom at the Battle of Badr.

Early Arabian poetry is one area where established culture influenced Islamic beliefs. Death to pre-Islamic poets was a condition that could not be avoided and must be dealt with philosophically:

> The young man runs, but his fated death reaches him
> Every day brings the fixed term nearer to him
> I know that my day will once reach me
> And I shall not care for my world any more[24]

One of the main differences between the pre-Islamic idea of death and the Islamic faith relates to the afterlife. Muhammad wanted to give the

---

[23] For a current discussion on warring tribes, see William S. McCallister, *COIN and Irregular Warfare in a Tribal Society* (Applied Knowledge International, 2007).

[24] The poem is from Hatim al-Ta'I in Helmer Ringgren, *Studies in Arabian Fatalism* (Uppsala: A.B. Lundequistska, 1955), 50, cited by Firestone, *The Origin of Holy War in Islam*, 29

Arabs around him reasons to fight because "the polytheist does not hope for raising after death so he wants to live long."[25] Under his idea of martyrdom, those who died for the cause of God could live forever.[26] The Quran builds on fate and links it to the afterlife in *sura* 55:26 saying, "All those upon earth pass away; eternal is the face of thy Lord in glory and honor."

Another interesting bridge between pre-Islamic thoughts on fate and Muslim conceptions is found in unique poetic themes and devices. One such device in Islamic poetry is the use of the owl as a central motif. Emil Homerin describes its use as "associated with specific views of life, death, and afterlife, thus becoming an important religious symbol to the ancient Arabs."[27] He compares semantic messages across time and cultures using anthropologic methods, and correlates certain cultural ideas from one group of people to another. In later Arabic poetry, Al-Hamasah describes the owl as a symbol of bereavement and despair: "If only I knew what [he] will say when my owl answers the screeching owls, and I am lowered into a deep shaft, its dust pouring upon me, in whose moist earth I'm long to stay."[28] The owl represents the correlation of the idea of fate, an idea Muhammad leveraged into martyrdom and the afterlife as part of his religious views.

The idea of martyrdom in Islamic doctrine may have some roots in other monotheist traditions and, as we have seen, Muhammad was probably influenced by other Arabian people's existing thoughts.[29] He may have received some persuasion from the Christian idea of

---

[25] Ishaq, 254-255.

[26] This is one of the basic concepts of *jihad* which will be discussed later.

[27] Emil T. Homerin, "Echoes of a Thirsty Owl: Death and Afterlife in Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44 (Jul., 1985), 165

[28] Homerin, 183.

[29] Like many of the subjects covered, this is not intended to be a definitive look at the doctrine of certain aspects of the Islamic religion. Martyrdom in this instance will be limited to its impact at Badr. The literature on martyrdom is exhaustive and I have relied primarily on Michael Bonner. See his *Jihad in Islamic History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 72-83.

martyrdom that combines confession with the Greek form of the word "witnesses in law."[30] The Quran is not clear on distinguishing between those who are killed in battle as opposed to others in reaching the afterlife. It is clear that it is mentioned as a core belief to those who are taking part in *jihad* and, as we shall see, ascribes a higher form of paradise to those killed in battle. This is the primary difference between Christian ideas of martyrdom and Islamic ones. Instead of a metaphorical "soldier of God," Islam conveys the idea of actual soldiers who take up arms and die in the cause of their religion.[31] In the *hadith*, the concept of martyrdom is laid out in even greater detail and is full of examples of rich rewards to those who die in battle.[32] Michael Bonner concludes that "the Islamic community admired its martyrs as models of physical courage" and "relentless striving (*jihad*)" in military campaigns.[33]

Even though Muhammad was not initially in the fight at Badr, after the first two Muslims were killed he came to the battlefield saying, "By God . . . no man will be slain this day fighting against them (the Meccans) with steadfast courage advancing not retreating but God will cause him to enter Paradise."[34] To give the early Muslims confidence in their newfound faith, Muhammad wanted his followers to display courage in the face of death. This courage is exemplified in the poem below and offers insight to the next cultural concept which influenced the conduct of the battle, honor and revenge:

> *O my friends, a respected death*
> *Is better than an illusory refuge;*
> *Anxiety does not ward off the decree*

---

[30] Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History*, 73.

[31] Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History*, 77.

[32] See for example F. E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1994) 47. See also Halverson, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, chapter 13 on the "Seventy-Two Virgin" rewards espoused by modern radical Islamists. More detail on how the *hadith* treat Badr will be discussed below.

[33] Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History*, 76.

[34] Ishaq, 300.

But endurance is a cause of victory.
Death is better than vileness,
And having death before oneself is better than having it
behind.
Thus, courage! There is no escape from death.[35]

Honor & Revenge

The nomadic lifestyle forced the average person to exhibit a higher level of courage than those living a sedentary lifestyle. Raiding was common and, to a certain extent, expected. It was, for example, commonplace to tolerate banditry, so long as the women were not hurt in such actions. Accordingly, Watt tells us that the "nomad is usually the better fighter" and the "merchants are ready to pay a desert tribe for the protection of their homesteads and herds and for the safe passage of their caravans."[36] Nomadic tribes used this as a source of consistent income, and their loyalty generally aligned with the merchant who would pay the most.

Sometimes protection did not work, and individuals had to take matters into their own hands. Revenge in practice could eventually lead to conflict. A system was necessary to pay for the loss of property or treasure, often times in a form of retribution or "tit-for-tat" retaliation. This Old Testament of the Bible "eye-for-an-eye" mentality may have contributed to the political instability and rampant tribal infighting so common during this period. Such behavior became a natural way of maintaining some semblance of order in a manner that seems somewhat barbarous to the "civilized" ways of today. If a life is taken by an outsider of a particular tribe or clan, that clan or kin group must exact the same punishment on the individual or offending clan responsible, even to the point of death. It was a communal responsibility and, when combined with the complicated intricacies of tribal allegiances, could generate widespread warfare and violence.

[35] Ringgren, cited by Firestone, *The Origin of Holy War in Islam*, 29.
[36] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 2.

One such example provided by Watt is the capture of two Muslims at ar-Raji. According to Ishaq, they were sent to Mecca to preach Islam but were taken captive by nomads along the way. Some Quraysh family members who fought at Badr, and had family killed there, purchased their freedom once they arrived in Mecca. Then the Muslims proceeded to kill the Quraysh outright. While no binding laws or enforcers existed to uphold justice, this blood debt presumably satisfied the groups in question. The assailants would go about in relative peace knowing their debts were paid.[37]

If it was impossible to exact life from an offending person, payment through a third party arbiter was an acceptable alternative. Muhammad utilized this practice to cover circumstances where taking a life was not politically viable. When a member of the Ansari tribe accidentally killed another member, the brother of the dead approached Muhammad to seek retribution for his losses. Muhammad arbitrated the situation and ordered the blood debt paid through financial arrangements. However, this did not satisfy the brother's requirement, so he killed the attacker anyway saying,

> I fetched him a stroke in vengeance
> Which drew blood that ebbed and flowed
> I said as the wrinkles of death covered him
> 'You can't be safe from [me] when they are wronged'[38]

Muhammad applied this communal, kinship blood tax requirement onto his conception of the new Muslim community as a whole. He labeled the community the *ummah*. Now retribution was not limited or restricted along tribal or kinship lines. It was extended under the overarching umbrella of Muslims as a group. According to the

---

[37] W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956.), 263 and Ishaq, 426-427.

[38] Ishaq, 492. "B. Baker" in this instance is the individual taking revenge for his brother's death.

Constitution of Medina,[39] Muhammad and "the believers exact vengeance for one another where a man gives his blood in the way of God."[40] Like other customs and patterns of behavior, Muhammad confronted and could not change, he used retribution to his advantage and demanded it among his followers.

The nomadic lifestyles tied the blood tax directly to their security needs. It engendered a social phenomenon Philip Salzman calls "balanced opposition" where "everybody is a member of a nested set of kin groups."[41] If a confrontation exists, fear of retribution from a similar-sized tribe acts as a deterrent from future aggression. When violence did erupt, the concept of honor is embedded in the fulfillment of these obligations. A third party arbiter, like the role Muhammad played, would also be an honorable method for resolving disputes. If a problem came up between two opposing tribes, it was honorable for the warring tribes to turn to a foreigner in order to maintain their reputation through negotiation.[42]

Tribal Solidarity

Muhammad leveraged parts of the concepts of retribution and martyrdom when he created the *ummah.* All Muslims were now bound by a common religion that went beyond just blood relation. By creating a new tribe, he was able to bring this coalition towards *jihad* against foreign invaders and, as at Badr, for offensive operations. This cultural welding together of the tribes through religion was perhaps the most critical component of Muhammad's overarching strategy. We have already discussed some aspect of the interrelationships amongst the

---

[39] This was a "document from Muhammad the prophet between the believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib, and those who followed them and joined and labored with them. They are one community (*ummah*) to the exclusion of all men." See Ishaq, 231-232. This document and other political pacts like it will be discussed later.

[40] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina,* 265.

[41] Philip Carl Salzman, "The Middle East's Tribal DNA," *Middle East Quarterly,*(2008), 1.

[42] Salzman, "The Middle East's Tribal DNA," 3

Arabian tribes in the discussion on retribution, but the commonality of their actions was not limited to just fighting.

Arabic tribal solidarity was a necessity, in part because of economics and geography. A common misperception of this time frame is thinking nomadic tribes dominated the settlements. In reality, most tribes lived in settled areas, because markets, religious centers, and areas of commerce predominated. As previously mentioned, those areas fortunate enough to have sufficient water supplies maintained sedentary civilizations focused on trading with nomadic tribes from the surrounding desert. These desert tribes formed a diverse background depending on the terrain of their inhabitance.[43]

Nevertheless, nomadic and sedentary tribes all had a common form of lifestyle found in tribal organization. These people belonged "to several interrelated groups that expressed membership in terms of real or supposed kinship in the paternal line."[44] They gained social standing and received security through these relationships. Tribal members formed even further bonds with other tribes through distant kinship to form even larger security attachments by paternal line. These attachments, however, were not always through strictly relational or blood lines. As a natural phenomenon to a culture in constant movement, the tribal makeup was also in constant flux, where outsiders would assimilate with neighboring tribes creating even bigger units.

Tribal solidarity did not necessarily translate into any semblance of law or organization. On the contrary, until Muhammad united them under the banner of Islam "no authority to legislate or enforce universal rules beyond the limits of the kinship group, and even within the kinship group no formal system of law developed beyond that of cultural

---

[43] Fred McGraw Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 15-20.
[44] Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests,* 20.

expectations of behavior."[45] Western social norms and behaviors simply did not exist. The only matter of recourse was in the strength of the tribe itself and the use of retaliation as a security and survival means. Therefore, "the larger the extended kinship group from which support was garnered, the more secure and powerful the group" was. [46] The numerous complex political struggles between religious leaders, sedentary economic centers, and nomadic herdsmen focused on this ability to bring others into their fold. Even within this struggle for group solidarity, inside tribes there would be "smaller groups intensely jealous of one another, and usually pursuing contrary policies" in order to gain ultimate control of the tribe.[47]

Tribal raiding necessitated strong leadership in martial values, and the religious tribes played a vital role in the development of tribal solidarity and Muhammad's ascendance to power. These religious tribes would often maintain control of trading centers, serving as honorable arbiters for any feuding tribes. Nomadic tribes listened to them out of fear for supernatural retribution to their crops, while sedentary tribes would respect their decisions as noble and just.[48] The tribes that were either headed by warrior nomads or sedentary religious aristocracies were constantly at odds with one another over regional domination. Muhammad, through his victory at Badr, combined the warrior ethos with a religious aristocratic air to launch his Islamic state.[49]

Politics & Badr

Muhammad was faced with perplexing issues of unity among the early Muslims and had to figure out a way to bring them together in some sort of political manner. Even still, "the idea that the Arabs constituted a unity existed, but only in a rudimentary form. It was

---

[45] Firestone, *The Origins of Holy War in Islam,* 32.
[46] Firestone, *The Origins of Holy War in Islam,* 33.
[47] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina,* 79.
[48] Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests,* 34-37.
[49] Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests,* 48-49.

through the achievements of Muhammad himself that it became more explicitly held."[50] This section will highlight some of those achievements Muhammad was able to exploit at Badr, specifically the Constitution of Medina, the meetings at Aqaba, and the idea of the *ummah* as a political entity.

Constitution of Medina

It is almost impossible to separate the notion of tribes and political power. The fundamental differences between the two are almost negligible from the Arabian standpoint during Muhammad's time. In fact, Watt tells us that "the tribe or confederation of tribes was the highest political unit" and to separate the two would do no good anyhow.[51] During Muhammad's rise to power in Mecca, the Quraysh gained control of the city by controlling economic centers and religious practices. The following chart shows the Quraysh clan during the height of Muhammad's power struggle at Mecca[52]:
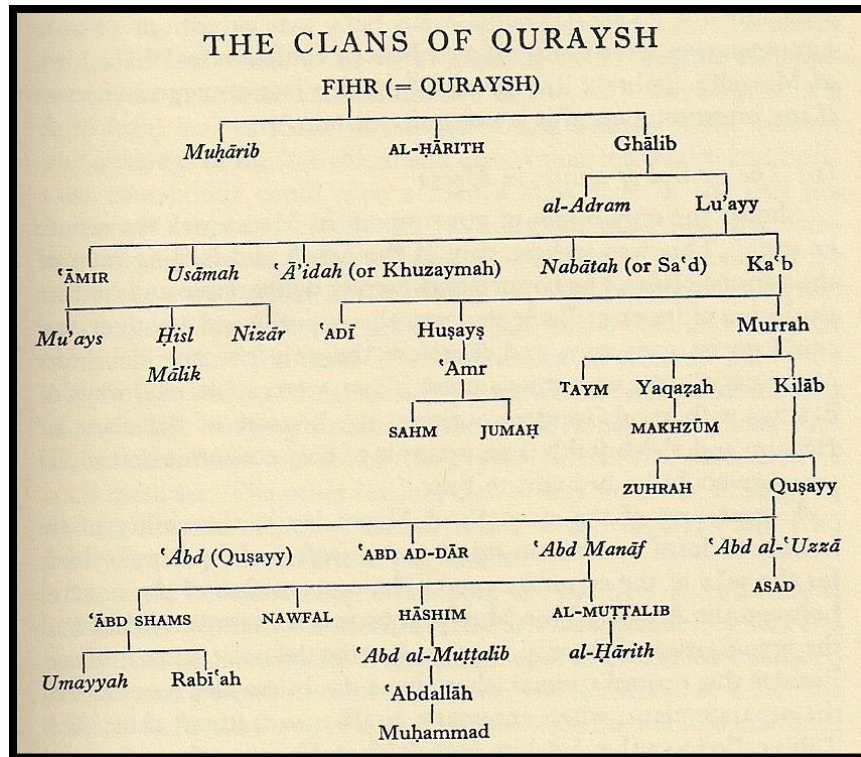
---

[50] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina,* 143.
[51] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca,* 17.
[52] Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca,* 7.

THE CLANS OF QURAYSH

FIHR (= QURAYSH)

Muḥārib   AL-ḤĀRITH   Ghālib

al-Adram   Lu'ayy

'ĀMIR   Usāmah   'Ā'idah (or Khuzaymah)   Nabātah (or Sa'd)   Ka'b

Mu'ays   Ḥisl   Nizār   'ADĪ   Huṣayṣ   Murrah

Mālik   'Amr

TAYM   Yaqaẓah   Kilāb

SAHM   JUMAḤ   MAKHZŪM

ZUHRAH   Quṣayy

'Abd (Quṣayy)   'ABD AD-DĀR   'Abd Manāf   'Abd al-'Uzzā

ASAD

'ĀBD SHAMS   NAWFAL   HĀSHIM   AL-MUṬṬALIB

Umayyah   Rabī'ah   'Abd al-Muṭṭalib   al-Ḥārith

'Abdallāh

Muḥammad

Figure 2. Clans of Quraysh

Source: Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 7.

An individual clan's power typically came from its overall economic worth and the martial qualities of the individual tribal members. As previously noted, no formal laws or regulations existed among the tribes, and the only sure way to reach agreements was through unanimous decisions by senatorial representation. These senates were not what modern readers would regard as a representative government, but were instead a conglomeration of tribal leaders. They would meet to discuss economic issues that affected the people in their tribe.[53] Under these circumstances, it is easy to see why the blood tax was an important and effective means of maintaining order among feuding tribes.

Typically, the tribe with the greatest military prowess gained the power advantage. They were able to extend their protection to other tribes, while simultaneously strengthening their own economic base.

---

[53] See the discussion in Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 8-11 on how tribal affairs were controlled and organized.

Tribal solidarity extended to political confederacies that would provide the safest means of travel when trading in various parts of Arabia. The Quraysh were able to expand their military might by promising protection through their skillful and shrewd diplomatic maneuvering.

Muhammad was keenly aware of the importance to garner support from neighboring tribes, and the Constitution of Medina represents his first venture into the realm of diplomacy. Sources differ on when the document was written, but this does not detract from its significance in Islamic politics and diplomacy.[54] Its value lies in the ideas it expresses that affected Muhammad's more immediate political goals. The document implies Muhammad's supremacy as the chief executive of the various clans and groups who were signatory to the agreement. This was akin to tribal chiefs presiding over their own clan. The document gave Muhammad authority for reconciling disputes among the tribes with the phrase, "whenever you differ about a matter it must be referred to God and to Muhammad."[55]

Muhammad's role as the clan's chief executive did not occur overnight. The reference to God *and* Muhammad is important, because it combined his authority of a politician within a tribe with his religious command of the new believers. Watt argues that even though the constitution spelled out significant roles given to Muhammad, at this time he was just another clan leader with religious authority and "probably first became a force in the politics of Medina after his military

---

[54] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina,* 221-226 provides a brief discussion on whether it took place before or after Badr from various other sources. One argument relative here is the inclusion of the fact that some of the articles implied that some fighting had already taken place and is probably alluding to Badr. Since it is the thesis of this work that Badr was the first major battle in Muslim history, this seems like a reasonable argument. However, it is also equally clear that "fighting" in the sense the Constitution refers to does not necessarily mean a pitched battle like Badr but could be a reference to raiding or other forms of violence.

[55] Ishaq, 232.

success at Badr."[56] The significance of Badr as a seminal event in Muhammad's rise to power is clearly evident in his ability to leverage that victory with previously established roles as a political and religious leader. Donner echoes the difficulty in consolidating political power in seventh century Arabia, stating that "it was not the means of extending dominance that were lacking, but the means of giving the tribal confederation, once built, a measure of cohesiveness."[57] Muhammad's religious ideology and military victory at Badr provided the means towards achieving a unified Islamic state.

The Pledges of Aqaba

The First Pledge of Aqaba led directly to the *hijra*, or Muhammad's emigration from Mecca to Medina. The emigration "has the connotation not of geographical transference, but of separation from one's family and clan and attachment to others."[58] This had tremendously significant cultural and political connotations in seventh century Arabia. It cannot be understated how important the event is in history, as Muslims calculate time based on this experience. Those who accompanied Muhammad on the *hijra* were termed "Emigrants," and held special favor amongst their new Muslim community.[59]

Prior to the *hijra* there had to be conditions in place for Muhammad to safely and successfully transition his power from Mecca to Medina. This was realized through the meeting of "twelve Helpers" who "attended the fair and met at al-Aqaba."[60] They were the first to pledge their allegiance to Muhammad and were members of a powerful

---

[56] W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1961), 96.
[57] Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests,* 54.
[58] Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 91.
[59] Watt uses the term "Emigrants" with the Arabic "*Muhajirun*" in *Muhammad at Mecca,* 150. See also http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Muhajirun
[60] Ishaq, 198.

Medinian tribe. Ishaq calls it the "pledge of women," which one of its leaders identified as a pledge "to the prophet after the manner of women and that was before war was enjoined."[61] The term given to these dozen helpers, *Ansar,* is derived from the verb meaning "helping a person wronged against his enemy."[62]   This signifies a people previously unaffiliated with Muhammad's religious exhortations willing to join him in a political alliance.

The second pledge of Aqaba between Muhammad and the *Ansar* is known as the "Pledge of War." This pledge is the beginning of permission to wage offensive warfare in the name of God. This agreement was said to occur "when God intended to honor them and to help His apostle and to strengthen Islam and to humiliate heathenism and its devotees."[63] The pledge was specifically aimed at solidifying the groundwork for Muhammad's move to Medina and his repudiation of the polytheists in Mecca. Muhammad made a direct militant appeal to those assembled, calling for their "allegiance on the basis that you protect me as you would your women and children." Some of the *Ansar* were afraid that once they achieved victory over the Meccans, Muhammad would leave them and move on to other interests. Muhammad, however, assured them that this was the beginning of a lasting agreement with the statement, "I will war against them that war against you and be at peace with those at peace with you."[64] Ishaq links this pledge with God's order to the apostle to fight:

> The apostle had not been given permission to fight or
> allowed to shed blood before the second Aqaba. He had
> simply been ordered to call men to God and to endure
> insult and forgive the ignorant. The Quraysh had
> persecuted his followers, seducing some from their

---

[61] Ishaq, 199.

[62] W. Montgomery Watt, "Al-Ansar" in *The Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol. 1,* 2nd ed., edited by H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), 514.

[63] Ishaq, 202.

[64] Ishaq, 203-204.

religion, and exiling others from their country. They had to choose whether to give up their religion, be maltreated at home, or to flee the country, some to Abyssinia, others to Medina. When Quraysh became insolent towards God and rejected His gracious purpose, accused His prophet of lying, and ill treated and exiled those who served Him and proclaimed His unity, believed in His prophet, and held fast to His religion, He gave permission to His apostle to fight and to protect himself against those who wronged them and treated them badly. The first verse which was sent down on this subject . . . was: 'Permission is given to those who fight because they have been wronged. God is well able to help them, - those who have been driven out of their houses without right only because they said God is our Lord . . . '[65] The meaning is: 'I have allowed them to fight only because they have been unjustly treated wile their sole offense against men has been that they worship God . . . ' Then God sent down to him: 'Fight them so that there be no more seduction,'[66] until no believer is seduced from his religion. 'And the religion is God's [and] until God alone is worshipped.'[67]

Muhammad's consolidation with the *Ansari* tribes led to the Meccans unifying their attempt to expel Muhammad from Mecca. The size of the groups of Muslims accompanying Muhammad, who were present at the second pledge of Aqaba, made it clear he was a political force to be reckoned with as he marched towards Medina. Conditions in Medina were ripe for Muhammad to take control there. Rampant violence and economic instability were becoming more and more commonplace for the people in the oasis town. They were ready for a charismatic leader to take control. Muhammad proved to be a valuable commodity, from a political and religious standpoint, for rescuing the Medinians from the situation to which they had grown accustomed.[68]

---

[65] Quran 22:40-42
[66] Quran 2:193
[67] Ishaq, 212-213.
[68] See Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 84-89.

The *Ummah* as a Political Entity

The constitution of Medina called for a coalition between the prophet, "the believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib, and those who followed them and joined them and labored with them. They are one community (*ummah*) to the exclusion of all men."[69] As noted above, the dominant Arabian political structure during Muhammad's time was the tribe. The intricate tribal relationships were based on loose confederation systems promising protection, retribution, and economic assistance. Muhammad's significance in assuming leadership over these tribes was in his lack of kin affiliation with anyone there. Instead, his authority came strictly from a religious basis and, through this, extended his rule beyond mere blood affiliations.

According to Muhammad, this authority does not come from him directly, but instead is bestowed on him through God as his messenger and final prophet. It is God's authority and message renouncing idol worship and Arabian pagan rituals around which Muhammad formulates his political legitimacy. Because he believed God's message was to reach all mankind, the *ummah* would be extended likewise to all who accepted his teaching and followed his path.[70] Furthermore, all previously established cultural customs and practices then associated with tribal relationships followed easily into Muhammad's "global" tribe concept. Not altogether theocratic, yet not altogether Arabian, it became a combination of a political necessity with established cultural values into a newfound religious community.[71]

The inclusion and importance of Medinian Jews cannot be understated in Muhammad's consolidation of political power in his early

---

[69] Ishaq, 231-232.

[70] F. E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1994), 199.

[71] For a discussion on how Muhammad innovated various Arabian norms with Jewish and Islamic religious principles, See Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam,* 202-210.

days. His relative tolerance towards the Jewish community may be partly religious and partly political. The religious similarities can be found in the Quranic verse that links Islam with Judaism where "He has established for you the same religion that He enjoined on Noah—and which we revealed to you—and that He enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus."[72] The political necessity of an alliance appears obvious on the surface, and the Jewish inclusion in the constitution and *ummah* is evidence of their importance. Originally, the Jews rejected Muhammad's prophetic claims. It was not until after he increased his power that the Muslims turned their animosities towards the Jews living in Medina.[73]

Frederick Denny, a leading scholar on political Islam, contends that the original intent of the Constitution of Medina did not mean to include Jews in the *ummah* at all. Since the "Constitution was very much a political-military document of agreement," their inclusion was strictly a matter of convenience for Muhammad to extend his power to the existing tribes in Medina.[74] The contradictions between statements such as, "to the Jew who follows us belong help and equality" with "The Jews . . . are one community with the believers (the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs)" only solidifies Muhammad's attempt to use the *ummah* as a political necessity fashioned on religious ideology.[75] Watt does not call this a contradiction at all, but rather a "development dictated by circumstances" due to the placement of the articles in the Medinian context.[76]

---

[72] Quran 42:13

[73] F. E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, 202-204.

[74] Frederick M. Denny, "Ummah in the Constitution of Medina," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 36 (Jan., 1977), 44.

[75] Ishaq, 233.

[76] Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 238-249. Scholars agree that the Constitution of Medina was not a single document but was rather a combination of many and Watt places the latter article to a date after the Battle of Uhud and nearer to the execution of the Jewish Banu Qurayzah tribe. Therefore, the earlier inclusion of the Jews supports the idea of the necessity of Muhammad including varying tribes in his alliance before Badr, but after his victory the necessity of this and their utility to his coalition was not

The *ummah* concept is critical in context with the second meeting of Aqaba and events at Badr. It joined members of different clans and, as we have seen, different faiths together. Through this new overarching social and religious structure and allegiance the tribes "bound themselves to war against all . . . while [Muhammad] promised them for faithful service thus the reward of paradise."[77] Including the Quraysh in the Medina agreement as signatories to receive protection signifies Muhammad's break with members of his own kin, while simultaneously accepting them as believers in Islam.

Muhammad set the stage brilliantly to consolidate power in Medina in preparation for Badr. The confluence of ideas such as martyrdom, tribal solidarity, revenge, and various political agreements set the requisite conditions for a military operation to legitimize his standing. Clearly, without a solidified and politicized *ummah,* and concepts such as the blood tax and martyrdom, Badr would not have been possible.

---

as vital. See also Frederick M. Denny, "Ummah in the Constitution of Medina," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 36 (Jan., 1977): 39-47 and R.B. Serjeant, "The 'Sunnah Jami'ah," Pacts with the Yathrib Jews, and the 'Tahrim' of Yathrib: Analysis and Translation of the Documents Comprised in the So-Called 'Constitution of Medina,'" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41 (1978): 1-42.

[77] Ishaq, 208.

Chapter 3
Badr: Course & Consequences

It was the first arrow to be shot in Islam

The Prophet looked at the people of the well (the well in which the bodies of the pagans killed in the Battle of Badr were thrown) and said, "Have you found true what your Lord promised you?" Somebody said to him, "You are addressing dead people." He replied, "You do not hear better than they but they cannot reply."

The Battle of Badr

The preceding chapter described some of the context facing Muhammad as well as the social and political factors relevant to the Battle of Badr. This chapter describes the battle itself. First, it is important to set the stage with regards to the geography and the relative importance the city of Badr had during seventh century Arabian society. Then, some key events leading directly to the engagement at Badr are discussed, as they relate to the fighting. Finally, since the argument in this thesis is that the Battle of Badr is a decisive battle in Islamic history, it is important to analyze what that religion's holy text says. The Quran, unsurprisingly, has much to say about the battle.

The Geography of Badr

The city of Badr, or Badr Hunayn, is a small town southwest of Medina and, according to the Encyclopedia of Islam, was just a night's journey from the coast "at the junction of a road from Medina with the caravan route from Mecca to Syria."[1] It was a traditional market, where a fair was held every year. The city itself is located in a wide plain surrounded by steep hills with sand dunes on either side. According to Muhammad Hamidullah, who wrote a military history on Muhammad

---

[1] W. Montgomery Watt, "Badr" in *The Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol. 1,* 2nd ed., edited by H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), 807.

and toured the site, the journey on the road from Mecca to Badr is about ten hours on a camel and is "very pleasant, the land being more fertile" than the desert which surrounds it.[2] He also remarks that there is plenty of water and pasture for large numbers of camels at Badr itself, with the route marked by the thick forest al-Is.[3]

Badr is situated in a valley with mountains on either side made of accumulated sand. The ground is very soft, but in some places the sand turns into stones and rocks.[4] These hills are referenced in the Quran in *sura* 8:42 as the "yonder bank" and the "nearer bank." They provided temporary protection to various caravans, especially the Quraysh in this instance, travelling through the area. With its somewhat heightened importance as a market and trading center, the city of Badr was well equipped with substantial wells to accommodate the various caravans stopping for provisions or to conduct trade.

Precipitous Events Leading to Badr

The immediate causes of the confrontation at Badr are difficult to quantify. On one hand, it was an inevitable confluence of cultural and political factors manifested in a religious war at an opportune time. Practically speaking, however, the two armies required real reasons for joining battle. Among these tangible reasons are the economic benefits provided by raiding a large caravan, retribution for various raids performed by the Muslim base at Medina, and a form of revenge by the Quraysh after a particular raid at Nakhla by the Muslims.

The specific caravan led by Abu Sufyan will be dealt with below, but it is important to note the significance of obtaining wealth through raiding caravans of neighboring tribes. The situation between the

---

[2] Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad* (Hyderabad: Deccan, 1973), 14.

[3] Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad*, 14.

[4] Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad*, 15.

Muslims and Quraysh had deteriorated to such a point that these raids had become relatively commonplace. Furthermore, as was the custom of emigration from one tribe to another, the Muslims left everything behind in Mecca and had to rely on economic support from the tribes in Medina. They were essentially starting over and were rebuilding their economic base by raiding. One author writes about the causes of the battle as the "fears of the . . . Meccans [coming] true when Meccan trade with Syria was threatened by the Muslims."[5] Hamidallah, however, looks beyond economics and places the blame of the battle on the Meccans through their "political pressure . . . on the ruler and other influential people of the countries of their refuge"[6] during the emigration. However, he does acknowledge the economic pressure the Muslims applied to the Quraysh during this time, which probably provoked the latter tribe to war.

Muhammad justified the raids by the Muslims living in Medina because of their economic plight. There were a series of raids with the Muslim and *Ansar* and Muhammad actually led a few of them.[7] One in particular was led by an emigrant of Muhammad and took place without the help of any of the *Ansar*. Although no fighting took place, Ishaq records that "the first arrow to be shot in Islam" occurred here.[8] Also significant to this raid was the defection of two Muslim warriors who accompanied the Quraysh but went back with the Muslims to "whom they really belonged."[9] In another expedition, 30 Muslims (with no *Ansar* again) met 300 from Mecca near the shore. Here an intermediary, from someone "at peace with both parties," prevented conflict between them.[10]

---

[5] Muhammad Ahmad Bashumail, *The Great Battle of Badr* (New Delhi, India: Islamic Book Service, 1999), 78.
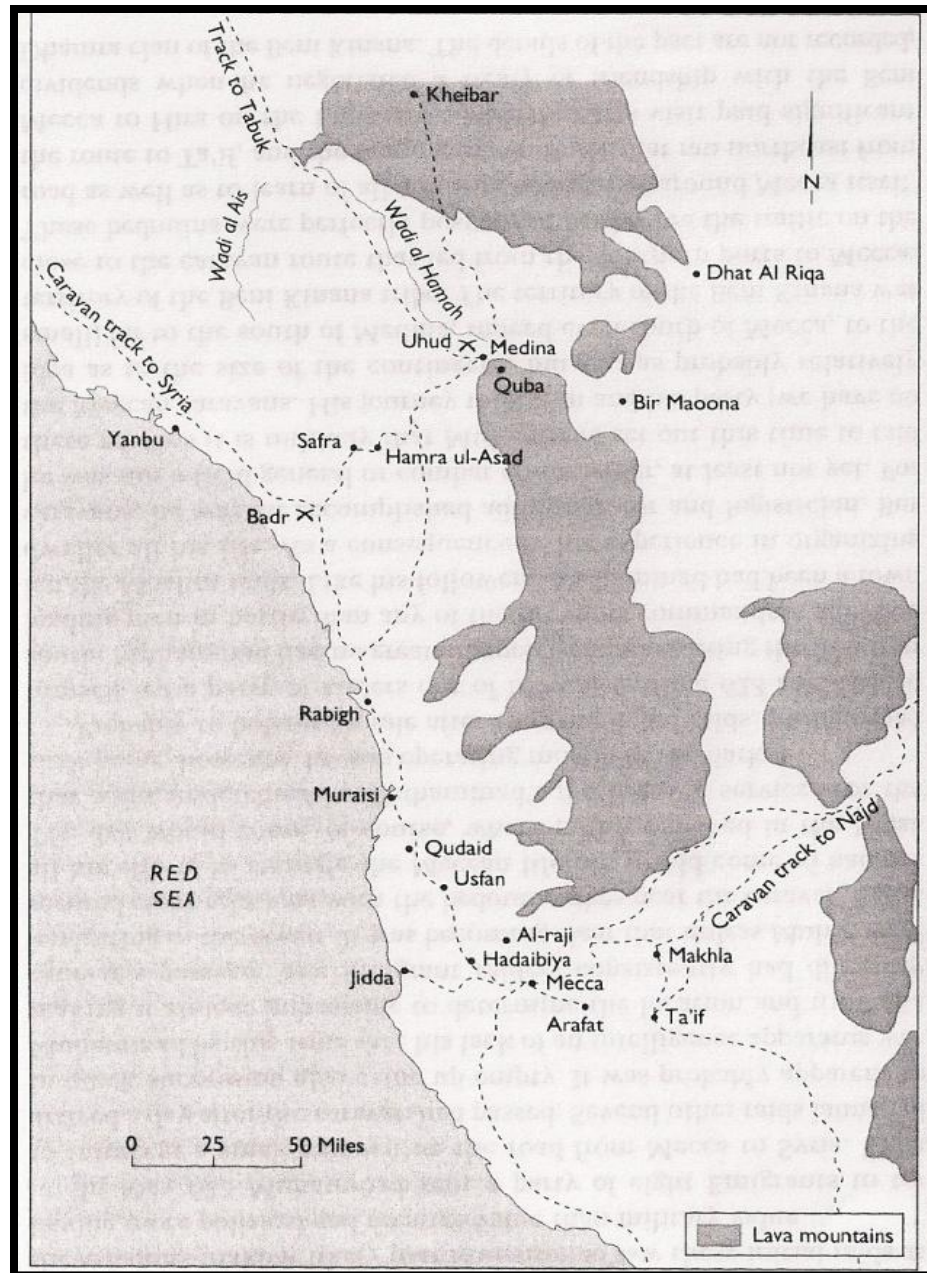
[6] Hamidullah, 15.

[7] The term *maghazi* is given to the "campaigns of the Prophet." See Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History*, 21.

[8] Ishaq, 281.

[9] Ishaq, 281.

[10] Ishaq, 281-286; see also Bashumail, *The Great Battle of Badr*, 74-75.

Figure 3. Map of Muslim Raids. This map shows the locations of various raids Muhammad took part in, or ordered, prior to Badr.

Source: Gabriel, *Islam's First Great General*, 78.

Muhammad's remaining raids took place without violence, with one exception. The intention of the raids was to consolidate his political base, as suggested by Bashumail, but economic benefits continued elude

him.[11] Richard Gabriel puts the raid of Nakhla as a seminal event leading to hostilities at Badr, saying that "Muhammad justified the killings at Nakhla in the name of God."[12] The final expedition before the events of Badr was much more significant, given the culture of the time. Muhammad sent eight Muslims on a raid with instructions in a letter to "proceed until you reach Nakhla between Mecca and Al-Ta'if. Lie in wait there for Quraysh and find out for us what they are doing."[13] Two men remained behind, while the rest continued on to Nakhla. While the two continued on their own searching for a lost camel, the other six stumbled on a portion of the Quraysh caravan and, Ishaq tells us, "took council among themselves" to figure out their next move.[14] It was the sacred month, and killing was a forbidden act common to all Arabian cultures at the time. They soon realized that if they let them go, they would enter the forbidden place, where they would not be able to attack them either. After some deliberation they decided to strike, killing one and taking two prisoners, while one escaped.

When they returned to Medina and attempted to present the booty to Muhammad, he refused to accept the caravan and the prisoners stating, "I did not order you to fight in the sacred month."[15] Understandably, the two Muslims were afraid of the consequences of their actions. The Meccans and Jews that were in an alliance opposed to Muhammad used this incident against them. It was at this time, according to traditions, that *sura* 2:217 was revealed which stated:[16]

> They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting
> in it. Say: Fighting in it is a grave matter, and hindering
> (men) from Allah's way and denying Him, and (hindering
> men from) the Sacred Mosque and turning its people out

[11] Bashumail, *The Great Battle of Badr*, 78.
[12] Gabriel, *Islam's First Great General,* 84.
[13] Ishaq, 287.
[14] Ishaq, 287.
[15] Ishaq, 287.
[16] Ishaq, 288. See also Zeitlin, 128

of it, are still graver with Allah, and persecution is graver than slaughter; and they will not cease fighting with you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can; and whoever of you turns back from his religion, then he dies while an unbeliever—these it is whose works shall go for nothing in this world and the hereafter, and they are the inmates of the fire; therein they shall abide."

Although the prisoners on each side were eventually returned, the fact that the first man was killed by a Muslim and a significant amount of Quraysh property was gone was not taken lightly by the Meccan tribe. This blood debt, as discussed earlier, was a critical component to causing the two armies to meet at Badr.
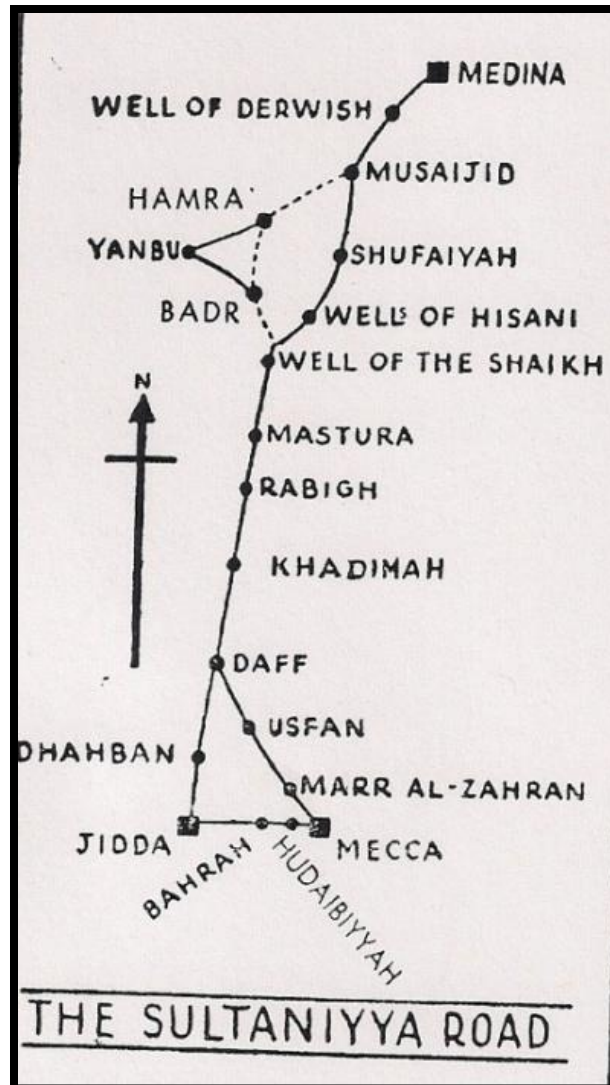
Abu Sufyan's Caravan

Caravans laden with critical goods travelled from Mecca to Syria about twice a year and were only lightly protected against the inevitable armed bandits and thieves. A large Quraysh caravan, known as the expedition of Al-'Ashira, set out along the route from Mecca to Syria.[17] About 30 to 40 men accompanied it under the leadership of Abu Sufyan, an experienced and influential military man.[18] Muhammad and his Muslim army were already raiding smaller, more localized caravans to build up their wealth and power base in Medina. This particular caravan would be a major boost to their morale, economic base, and political establishment.

---

[17] Bashumail, *The Great Battle of Badr*, 78. Watt says the "caravan of 1,000 camels was worth 50,000 *dinars*, and that nearly everyone in Mecca had a share in it." See Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 119.

[18] Ishaq, 289. Watt places the number of guards at 70. See Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 119.

Figure 4. The Sultaniyya Road. The "Imperial Road" was the most likely course Abu Sufyan took on his way from Mecca to Syria

Source: Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet,* 14.

When Muhammad heard about the caravan, depicted in figure 4, he invoked his treaties with those at Medina saying, "This is the Quraysh caravan containing their property. Go out to attack it, perhaps God will give it as a prey."[19] It appears from the sources there was relative reluctance to join him initially. Perhaps some internal struggle ensued on whether the real aim was the caravan and its economic benefits or the

---

[19] Ishaq, 289.

Quraysh army itself. The evidence for the latter may be found in the fact that Muhammad sent spies after the caravan on its way to Syria, instead of attacking it in a raid like he had been doing. *Sura* 8:7 addresses this struggle as well when it mentioned, "Allah promised you one of the two parties that it shall be yours." The Quran makes it clear that the initial objective was the caravan and its booty with the words, "you loved that the one not armed."

Clearly, if it had been Muhammad's intention to attack the "one not armed" in the caravan and not the army, he would have done so immediately, when he had a relative advantage of numbers and the element of surprise on his side.[20] Abu Sufyan, for his part, did not remain idle in his preparations either and sent out his own spies while "questioning every rider in his anxiety."[21] He apparently expected an attack at some point along his journey. When he continued to Syria he probably knew there was an ambush waiting for him on his way back. Therefore, he sent one of his fastest riders to return to Mecca for reinforcements. In fact, Muhammad's spies accompanied the caravan all the way to Damascus. The fact that Abu Sufyan knew they were being followed makes the situation all the more puzzling.[22] Why did Muhammad choose to continue north towards Syria when he did not know where the caravan was, while the Quraysh knew his own plans?

It is possible that Muhammad was still trying to consolidate his political power in the region north of Medina towards Badr and needed more time to approach the different tribes living there. More likely, however, he needed to make sure the alliances he had already made among the *Ansar* were going to be honored in any battle beyond

---

[20] "Without losing time, the Holy Prophet accompanied by two hundred men went forth from [Medina] to intercept the caravan." See Bashumail, *The Great Battle of Badr,* 78.
[21] Ishaq, 289.
[22] Abu Sufyan did not locate the exact position of the Muslim spies, but was aware of their general whereabouts. See Gabriel, *Islam's First Great General*, 88-90.

Medina.[23] Mohammad asked them directly, since they formed the majority of his army. Muhammad received his answer from Sa'd b. Mu'adh when he said, "We believe in you, we declare your truth, and we witness that what you have brought is the truth, and we have given you our word and agreement to hear and obey; so go where you wish, we are with you . . . we do not dislike the idea of meeting your enemy tomorrow. We are experienced in war, trustworthy in combat."[24]

The trading caravans would often generate widespread attention among the local population, and Abu Sufayan's was no exception. By the time Abu Sufyan and his caravan began the return trip to Mecca, the two armies were already on a collision course at Badr. Even though his spies were unable to locate the exact position of the Muslim army, he was undoubtedly able to glean information from various Bedouin.[25] They probably gave him a general idea as to the size of the army approaching him. Armed with this knowledge, Abu Sufyan was grateful for the messenger he sent to Mecca to mobilize the warriors there. His caravan was in imminent danger of being captured and he needed reinforcements to come to his aid.

Muhammad's army already decided to make their way to Badr, probably to secure water and shelter for the tired men after marching for days in the oppressive desert heat.[26] More likely, as Ishaq describes, the circuitous route Muhammad took was an indication that he was not clear where the Quraysh caravan was or where it would eventually end up.[27] Like the Quraysh, he probably relied on local Bedouin to lead him

---

[23] Gabriel, *Islam's First Great General*, 90.

[24] Ishaq, 294.

[25] Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad*, 18. See also Ishaq, 294.

[26] Particularly since it was Ramadan and the Muslims were undoubtedly fasting, although Muhammad seems to have ordered the fast broken after one or two days. Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad*, 17.

[27] Ishaq, 292-294. See also Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad*, 18.

through the desert. They most likely led the party to Badr to try and use his influence in local political disputes.

At this point, there were three parties converging on Badr. Muhammad's army from the route towards Medina, Abu Sufyan's caravan coming from Damascus, and the Meccan army summoned to help the Quraysh caravan. Muhammad sent forward a small reconnaissance party to the Badr wells. They ran into two watermen from the Quraysh reinforcement army. Ishaq tells us that the Muslim army was upset, hoping instead they would be from Abu Sufyan and not locals.[28] Apparently, though inconceivably, this is an indication that Muhammad did not know about the Meccan army approaching them focused on the caravan. From these two watermen, Muhammad was able to determine that the strength of the Meccan army was between 900 and 1,000 men.[29] One author notes this about how Muhammad was able to attain this information: "[T]his was the law of war laid down by the Prophet which allowed obtaining information about the enemy through all possible sources and even if it should mean distortion of facts, provided of course it is in the interest of the Muslim army and for security reasons."[30]

Meanwhile, Abu Sufyan conducted his own reconnaissance and went into the town himself to see what information he could gather. He spoke with some locals who had contact with the Muslim army and asked them if they had seen anything unusual. He determined, through some broken pieces of camel dung, evidence of the approaching army and immediately sent word to the caravan to change its course away from Badr in order to avoid a potential engagement. The caravan made a forced two-night journey made it safely to Mecca. Then, Abu Sufyan, seeing his caravan was now safe, sent an additional rider after them to

---

[28] Ishaq, 295.
[29] Ishaq, 295.
[30] Bashumail, *The Great Battle of Badr,* 97.

tell the remainder of the army to stay behind since their services were no longer required.[31]

Now that the caravan was safe, Abu Sufyan tried to turn the army back. He told them, "Since you came out to save your caravan, your men, and your property, and God has delivered them, go back."[32] But they still went on. It seems the caravan and people's safety was not enough. Abu Jahl's response was, "We will not go back until we have been to Badr." In a show of confidence bordering on arrogance, he continued, "We will spend three days there, slaughter camels and feast and drink wine, and the girls shall play for us. The Arabs will hear that we have come and gathered together, and will respect us in the future."[33] Each side now knew what they were facing. The Muslims received their wish of a decisive action against the Quraysh and the Meccan army looked to receive retribution for Muhammad's rebellious activities.

The Battle

With the respective armies assembled near each other around Badr, it appeared inevitable the two would collide on the battlefield. On the eve of March 16, 624,[34] Muhammad and his 314 men prepared to receive the Quraysh army by marching into the valley of Badr.[35]

---

[31] Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad*, 18.

[32] Ishaq, 296.

[33] Ishaq, 296.

[34] This is the date given by Watt in *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 119. Ishaq and Hamidallah give November 18, 623 and Gabriel says March 15, 624. For a comprehensive view on dating the battle see J.M.B. Jones, "The Chronology of the 'Maghazi'- A Contextual Survey," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 19 (1957): 245-280.

[35] There is much controversy in the sources on the total number of combatants on Muhammad's side at Badr. It is a significant detail since ideas of martyrdom and booty were often extended to direct and indirect contributions. Gabriel said 83 Emigrants and 231 *Ansar* accompanied Muhammad in, *Islam's First Great General*, 87. Hamidullah says "just over three hundred" in, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad*, 19. One of the Quraysh scouts said "Three hundred men, a little more or less" in Ishaq, 297. Bashumail places the number at 317 including 231 *Ansar* in, *The Great Battle of Badr*, 83. Nafziger says 300 in *Islam at War*, 6. Reza Aslam says 300 in,

Muhammad's initial selection of the terrain indicates his relative lack of knowledge in military affairs. He was challenged by one of his more experienced tacticians asking, "Is this a place which God has ordered you to occupy, so that we can neither advance nor withdraw from it, or is it a matter of opinion and military tactics?"[36] Muhammad deferred to his expertise, and he chose a better position closer to the enemy. This put their foe's line of sight directly in the sun's path during the critical early morning stages of the battle that would be fought the next day.[37] The Muslim army also maneuvered to occupy the critical wells to deny the enemy the ability to drink any water during the fight, something they would have most assuredly needed with the intense desert heat.[38]

The next morning before sunrise, the Quraysh advanced into the valley and prepared for battle. According to Ishaq, Muhammad called out, "O God, here come the Quraysh in their vanity and pride, contending with Thee and calling Thy apostle a liar."[39] As was typical of tribal fighting of the times, each side organized themselves according to tribal affiliation.[40] They also exchanged code words or watchwords among their army as a typical melee confused participants without any standardized uniforms.[41] This was exacerbated by the fact that brothers were fighting brothers and sons were fighting fathers. The Muslim army

---

No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam (New York, NY: Random House, 2005), 83. M.J. Akbar says "some three hundred strong" in, *The Shade of Swords: Jihad and the Conflict Between Islam and Christianity* (London: Routledge, 2002), 1. Watt provides more detail than just "over 300 men) and includes 238 *Ansar* and 86 Emigrants, which would put the number at 324 in, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman,* 119. Malik has 313 combatants with 243 *Ansar* in, *The Quranic Concept of War,* 79. Finally, and perhaps most authoritatively, Ishaq lists the combatants by name and even includes some who were dismissed by Muhammad for various reasons. He even labels the 314 combatants as those who "were allotted a share of the booty," and included 83 Emigrants. For Ishaq's complete list, see Ishaq 327-336.

[36] Ishaq, 297.

[37] Gabriel *Islam's First Great General*, 99.

[38] Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad*, 19.

[39] Ishaq, 297.

[40] Gabriel, *Islam's First Great General,* 99.

[41] Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad*, 20.

built a hut for Muhammad that served as a sort of command post for the duration of the battle. It also served as a shelter for protection from the oppressive sun and heat.[42]
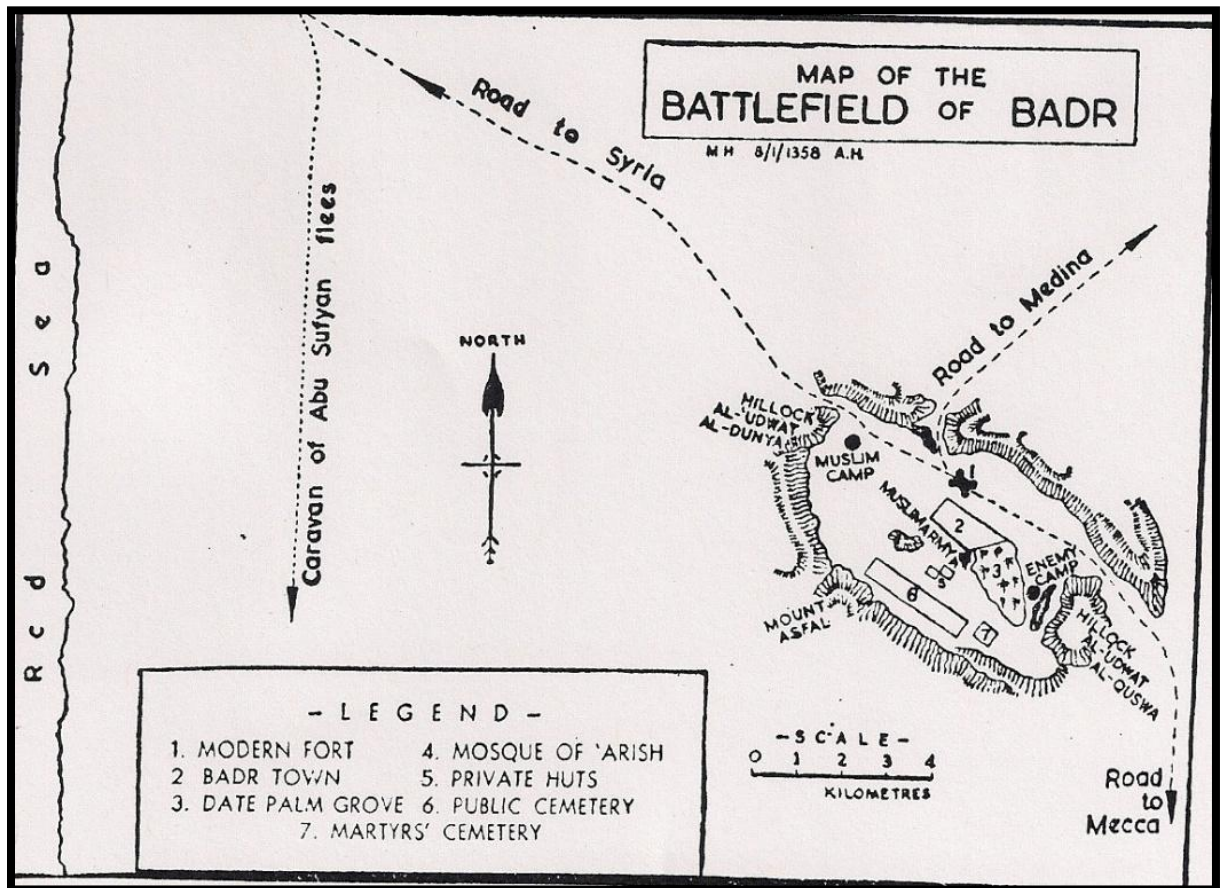
Figure 5. Map of the Battlefield of Badr. A general overview of the Battle of Badr. This map shows the probable routes each party took to the battlefield.

Source: Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad*, 15.

Ishaq recalls a peculiar story that is important in understanding the motives for the Quraysh as they aligned their forces. The Meccan army sent a scout to reconnoiter the Muslims and determine their strength. When he returned, he reported that they only had "three hundred men" and didn't see any "in ambush or support." Surprisingly,

---

[42] Ishaq, 297.

this scout attempted to dissuade the Quraysh from continuing, because it appeared from his observations that the Muslim army was prepared to fight with no retreat and no reinforcements. He let them know that "these men have no defense or refuge but their swords" and it was apparent that not one "of them will be slain till he slay one" of the Quraysh. Someone asked Abu Jahl his opinion on the matter, and he encouraged the army to fight. He told the army that they had the "blood-revenge before your eyes."[43] To him, there was no turning back now.[44]

In typical style of the time, the fighting opened with a challenge to engage in individual combat from three Meccans, including the father of the man killed at Nakhla. [45] When three *Ansar* stepped forward against them, the response from the Quraysh was hostile. They answered, "We have nothing to do with you [*Ansar*] . . . send forth against us our peers of our own tribe!"[46] In response, Muhammad sent his uncle Hamza, his cousin Ali (who also was his son-in-law after marrying Muhammad's daughter, Fatima), and another warrior named Ubayda.

With the sun in the face of their enemy, Hamza and Ali killed their challenger with relative ease. Ubayda and his opponent exchanged blows and each inflicted severe wounds on the other. Ubayda's adversary had his leg severed with "the marrow oozing from it."[47] The other two Muslim warriors quickly killed him after they dealt with their respective challengers. When Ubayda was carried off the battlefield and taken to Muhammad he asked him, "Am I not a martyr, O apostle of God?" To which the reply was, "Indeed you are." After the opening duel a melee ensued that consumed the battlefield for approximately two hours. Ishaq tells us that Muhammad spent the opening stages of the battle praying

---

[43] Ishaq, 297-298.

[44] Gabriel echoes this theme saying, "the colde of the blood feud pulled them in the opposite direction." See his *Islam's First Great General*, 92-93.

[45] Irving M. Zeitlin, *The Historical Muhammad* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 129.

[46] Ishaq, 299.

[47] Ishaq, 299.

in his hut, even to the point of a light sleep. When he finally came out and joined the fighting, his comment to Abu Bakr is enlightening towards understanding how he leveraged the concept of fate with his religious ideas of the afterlife. He said, "No man will be slain this day fighting against them with steadfast courage advancing not retreating but God will cause him to enter Paradise." [48]
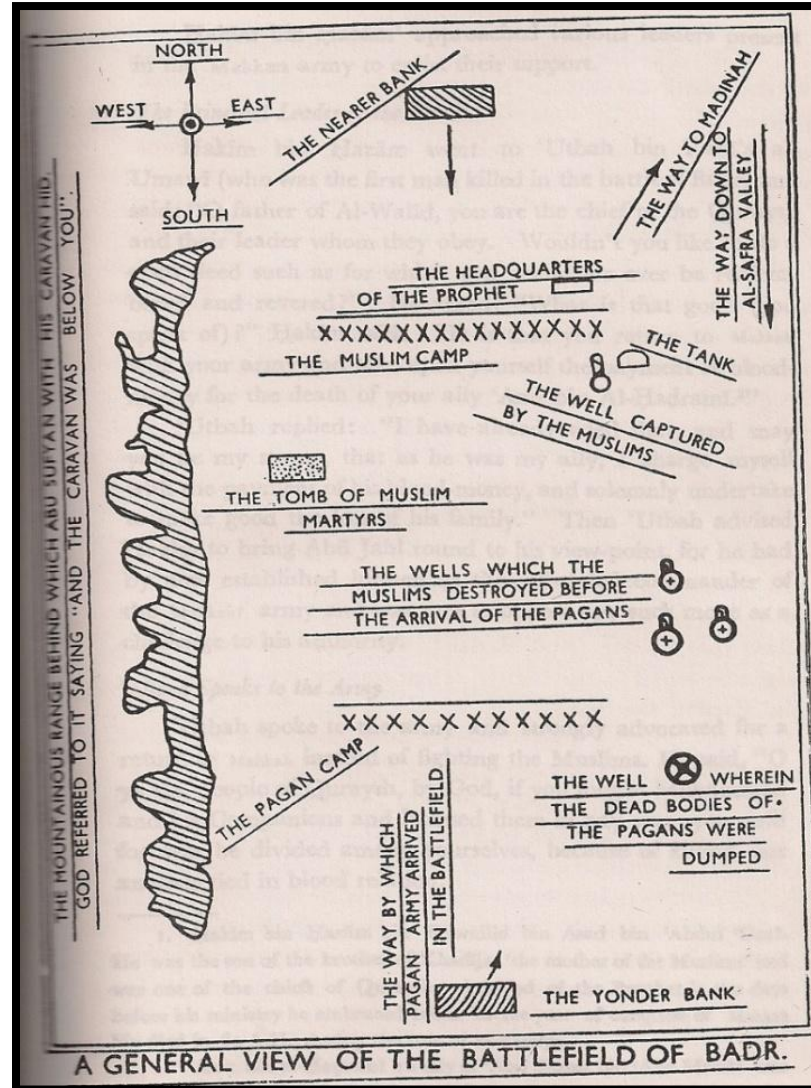
Figure 6. A General View of the Battlefield of Badr. This map displays a little more detail on the disposition of the Muslim and Quraysh forces.

Source: [1] Bashumail, *The Great Battle of Badr,* 101.

---

[48] Ishaq, 299-300.

Similarly, Muhammad invoked God's help for his army when he said, "God's help is come to you. Here is Gabriel holding the rein of a horse and leading it. The dust is upon his front teeth."[49] A later source indicates that Muhammad opened the battle by picking up a handful of rocks to throw at the enemy as an indication to start the attack. It was then (some traditions say it was Gabriel and his 1,000 angels) a windstorm came over the Meccans and clouded their vision, disorienting their army.[50] This story is somewhat corroborated by a report from a bystander who "went up a hill from which we could look down on Badr, we being polytheists waiting to see the result of the battle so that we could join in the looting. And while we were on the hill a cloud came near and we heard the neighing of horses and I heard one saying 'Forward, Hayzum!' (the name of Gabriel's horse)."[51] Ishaq records reports like this and, even though the historical accuracy of such information cannot be guaranteed, the belief in divine intervention in this battle cannot equally be discounted either.

Depending on the source, anywhere from 49 or 70 Quraysh were killed, with about the same number taken prisoner.[52] About 14 Muslims were reported as killed during the action. Once it became clear the Muslims had the upper hand, the Quraysh quickly departed towards Mecca. Muhammad had no means of pursuing them, instead focusing his energies on apportioning the booty and taking care of the prisoners.[53] Muhammad ordered the dead Quraysh bodies thrown into a pit. Later,

---

[49] Ishaq, 300.

[50] Gabriel, *Islam's First Great General,* 100-102 and Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, 214-215.

[51] Ishaq, 303.

[52] Bashumail says there were seventy killed and seventy captives, in *The Great Battle of Badr*, 115. In Gabriel's *Islam's First Great General*, 101, he notes 14 dead Muslims and about a 10% loss of total Muslim strength.

[53] Although not the focus of this study, the care of these prisoners is a hotly contested topic amongst the sources and would provide an excellent starting point for future research.

this study will look at some *hadith* and Quranic revelations that deal with this incident. After the battle Muhammad sent emissaries to Mecca and Medina to tell them what happened. Word soon spread about a relatively small army defeating an over-confident and much wealthier Quraysh.

Immediate & Eternal Consequences: Religion & Badr

Most works on the subject of Badr move from a description of the events of the battle to broad assertions about Islamic foundations or ways of warfare. Given the wealth of existing literature on the subject, there is little for the author to add on this subject. What is instructive, particularly as it relates to the discussion of the use of Badr as a historical example and rhetorical device in radical Islamist extremist tracts, is a deeper understanding of the attitudes and beliefs associated with Islam as they relates to the battle. The next section begins with some key definitions to better understand some background are presented before turning to the Quran and *Hadith* and what they have to say about the battle.

Jihad, Dar al-Harb, & Dar al-Islam

First, it is necessary to lay a basic foundation of some key terms in Muslim jurisprudence regarding warfare. Perhaps the most commonly misunderstood word in Muslim vernacular to Westerners is the term *jihad*. The concept of *jihad* is important to the discussion of Badr because, as offered here, that battle was decisive to Muhammad's overtly militant attempt at disseminating his religious ideology. Prior to Badr, and even before the second meeting at Aqaba, Muhammad was not yet given permission to wage warfare in the name of God, presumably because the opportunity did not yet exist.

The term *jihad* can be defined as "an effort directed towards a determined objective" and has come to be divided into the concepts of a

"greater" *jihad* and a "lesser" *jihad*.[54]   The latter is seen as this effort, or struggle, directed towards the physical realm while on earth. The former is aimed at the spiritual opposition for the favor of God and the hereafter. Furthermore, "*jihad* consists of military action with the object of the expansion of Islam and, if need be, of its defense."[55] This form of military action is an obligatory duty for the greater Muslim community and is the only form of warfare permissible and sanctioned in Islamic theory. This duty is a public "good" and just duty in that its primary aim is to rid the world of evil religions and people who have chosen not to accept the Muslim faith.[56]

    Dar al-Harb, literally translated as "house of war," is "the conventional formula derived from the logical development of the idea of *jihad* when it ceased to be the struggle for survival of a small community, becoming instead the basis of the 'law of nations' in the Muslim State."[57] This house of war gives Muslims the permission to wage holy war against nations who, after hearing the call to the Islamic faith, refuse to convert. Furthermore, the Quran calls it a "missionary war," a major duty for believers. According to this line of thinking, war must be waged against unbelievers wherever they are found. The ultimate aim of such a war is peace, albeit under Islamic rule.

    Dar al-Islam is "'the Land of Islam' or, more simply, in Muslim authors, 'our Country' and is the whole territory in which the law of

---

[54] E. Tyan, "djihad" in *The Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol. 1,* 2nd ed., edited by H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), 538. For a discussion on how Badr relates to ideas of Just War in Islamic jurisprudence, see Fred M. Donner's "The Sources of Islami Conceptions in War" and Richard C. Martin's "The Religious Foundations of War, Peace, and Statecraft in Islam" in John Kelsay and James Turner Johnson, eds., *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1991).

[55] Tyan, 538.

[56] Some authors have taken this Manichean view to be an example for Islamic imperialism. Badr is one turning point for Efraim Karsh in his *Islamic Imperialism: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

[57] A. Abel, "Dar al-Harb" in *The Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol. 1,* 2nd ed., edited by H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), 126.

Islam prevails."[58] This concept is an extension of the earlier formation of the *ummah* discussed above. This house of Islam, as it is sometimes called, provides protection to those who live in countries where the law of Islam is the law of the state. In its origin, this consent extends mainly to the People of the Book as *dhimmis.* According to classical Islamic doctrine, everything outside *Dar al-Islam* is war unless, as in the case of the *dhimmis,* the subjects pay the *jizyah,* or poll tax to their Muslim rulers.

The importance of these three concepts, *jihad, Dar al-Islam,* and *Dar al-Harb,* lies in their relation to Badr as a seminal event in Islamic history. As Rudolph Peters states, "the origin of the concept of *jihad* goes back to the wars fought by the Prophet Muhammad and . . . it is clear that the concept was influenced by the ideas of war among the pre-Islamic Northern Arabic tribes."[59] Prior to Badr, and prior to any cohesive alliance that gave the early Muslims the means necessary to wage war, *jihad* existed only in a defensive posture against the Meccans and Quraysh, who were constantly persecuting Muhammad and his followers. With the formation of the *ummah,* there could now be a division among believers and non-believers into *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb.* Badr provided the vehicle to exhort the early followers towards striving for God's will through a "holy war" against those who did not follow the Muslim faith.

The Quran & Badr

There are numerous verses in the Quran which either directly or indirectly deal with the Battle of Badr. This includes 75 verses alone, the entire eighth *sura,* which discusses the concept of booty, or spoils of war.

[58] A. Abel, "Dar al-Islam" in *The Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol. 1,* 2nd ed., edited by H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), 127.
[59] Rudolph Peters in Andrew Bostom, ed. *The Legacy of Jihad: Islamic Holy War and the Fate of Non-Muslims* (New York: New York, 2008), 320.

One significant verse outside of these *Sura* was said to be revealed after Badr, but before Uhud: "And Allah certainly did assist you at Badr when you were weak; be careful of (your duty to) Allah then, that you may give thanks."[60] This latter verse was presumably revealed to give the early Muslims confidence in their ability to defeat the Meccans again at Uhud, as they had done previously at Badr.

The eighth *sura* provides remarkable insight into the importance the Quran places on the battle and its subsequent place in Muslim religious thought. The title itself, *al-anfal* or "spoils of war," indicates how important violence would become to future Islamic generations as an entire chapter of holy scripture is devoted to the topic.[61] In this collection of revelations future generations are given guidance on how to deal with some of the problems created by battle, specifically the booty the Muslim army acquired from their Quraysh enemy. In some English translations, they are not actually spoils of war but are the "bounties of Allah." Verses 8:1 and 8:41 address these spoils directly:

> *They ask you about the windfalls. Say: The windfalls are for Allah and the Messenger. So be careful of (your duty to) Allah and set aright matters of your difference, and obey Allah and His Messenger if you are believers.* **8:1**

> *And know that whatever thing you gain, a fifth of it is for Allah and for the Messenger and for the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, if you believe in Allah and in that which We revealed to Our servant, on the day of distinction, the day on which the two parties met; and Allah has power over all things.* **8:41**

The University of Southern California's Center for Jewish-Muslim Engagement groups the first 41 verses into portions that deal with this problem of war. They are exhortations for reminding future armies that

---

[60] Quran 3:123

[61] Interestingly, *al-anfal* was the name of a Saddam Hussein operation in the late 1980's where the former Iraqi dictator attempted to eliminate, among others, the Kurdish population in Northern Iraq.

they will be successful in battle only with God on their side, including such lines from 8:10 as "victory is only from Allah." Verses 11 through 18, however, form a sort of narrative of the conditions the armies faced while at Badr. Specifically, verse 11 mentions the rain "sent down from the sky," that made the ground firm for the Muslim army to stand on. The combination of the physical description of the battle with the spiritual commentary is akin to the greater and lesser *jihad* described earlier. Verse 11 reminds Muhammad's army that "He caused calm to fall on you as a security . . . that he might fortify your hearts and steady (your) footsteps."

Further instruction on battlefield behavior is given in verses 15, 16, and 20 telling the believers to "not turn your backs to them (the enemy)" and "whoever shall turn his back to them on that day—unless he turn aside for the sake of fighting or withdraws to a company—then he, indeed, becomes deserving of Allah's wrath . . ." The remaining 41 verses deal primarily with the spiritual support Allah provides as described here:

> *And remember when you were few, deemed weak in the land, fearing lest people might carry you off by force, but He sheltered you and strengthened you with His aid and gave you of the good things that you may give thanks.*
> **8:26**

This verse is alluding to the seemingly insurmountable odds that heavily favored the Quraysh, by most accounts to have been 1,000 to 300. But intertwined among the spiritual realm are three key verses which deal with physical application and, perhaps, divine intervention:

> *And when our communications are recited to them, they say: We have heard indeed; if we pleased we could say the like of it . . .* **8:31**

> *And fight with them until there is no more persecution and religion should be only for Allah . . .* **8:39**

When your Lord revealed to the angels: I am with you,
therefore make firm those who believe. I will cast terror
into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off
their heads and strike off every fingertip of them. **8:12**

Verse 31 has been interpreted by centuries of Muslim scholars to be clear evidence of the need to attempt to convert their foes to Islam prior to beginning any hostilities, as was done at Badr. The second verse has also been used to indicate the need to continue fighting until Islam is the only religion on earth. Finally, verse 12 is an indication of the supposed 1,000 angels sent to the battlefield, who helped defeat the Quraysh army.

The next group of verses, 42—54, is generally classified as lessons to future Muslims on placing their trust in God in preparing for this and future battles. *Sura* 8:42 hints at the battle's preordainment, claiming that even "if you had mutually made an appointment, you would certainly have broken away from the appointment." It continues in 8:43 that "you would have disputed in the matter" and in 8:44 "in order that Allah might bring about a matter which was to be done." The grouping of these verses and those that follow indicate that the Muslims were indeed heavily outnumbered, and would understandably be hesitant to commit to battle. Badr's example is provided to many as an example to strengthen the weak-hearted in any situation, particularly a military engagement.

The remainder of the s*ura*, verses 55—75, offers excellent illustrations on the manner with which Muslims are allowed to enter into treaties with other nations or armies and the treatment of prisoners of war. Specifically, 8:56 cautioned the army at Badr against their unbelieving enemy that "those with whom you make an agreement [might] break their agreement every time." Further, 8:58 continues the thought from 56 which exhorts "if you fear treachery on the part of the people, then throw them back to them on terms of equality," telling them

to guard against treaties while treating the unjust with equality. 8:61 and 62 follow 8:31 cited earlier where if the enemy is "inclined to peace, then incline to it and trust in Allah." Followed immediately is "if they intend to deceive you—then surely Allah is sufficient for you." Finally, Muslims are reminded to "exhort the believers to fight" in 8:65.

The Muslim view on the treatment of prisoners of war can be examined through this first pitched battle in Islamic history. Early evidence on how they should be treated is seen through some key verses of the Quran. This is exemplified in *sura* 8:67 that says "it is not fit for a prophet that he should take captives unless he has fought and triumphed in the land." This could be an indication that prisoners are only allowed if total victory is achieved, as at Badr. They should be treated according to 8:70: "say to those of the captives who are in your hands: if Allah knows anything good in your hearts, He will give to you better than that which has been taken away from you and will forgive you." This is an indication of the Muslim view of continuing to attempt to convert their foe to Islam even after becoming a prisoner.

The final four verses offer a glimpse into the conduct of actual combatants versus those who are unable due to infirmities, sickness, or other reasons. They specifically talk about guarding one another and protecting those who are believers and those who are not.

> *Surely those who believed and fled (their homes) and struggled hard in Allah's way with their property and their souls, and those who gave shelter and helped—these are guardians of each other; and (as for) those who believed and did not fly, not yours is their guardianship until they fly; and if they seek aid from you in the matter of religion, aid is incumbent on you except against a people between whom and you there is a treaty, and Allah sees what you do.* **8:72**

It is not enough just to believe, but it is necessary to struggle with "property and their souls" in order to be protected. If shelter and aid is

given, too, this is also seen as worthwhile. However, Muslims are to give protection only "until they fly" or struggle in Allah's way.

> *And (as for) those who disbelieve, some of them are the guardians of others; if you will not do it, there will be in the land persecution and great mischief.* **8:73**

The concept here is that since the enemy is protecting themselves, the Islamic armies must do the same or else there will be confusion, corruption, and mischief amongst the Muslim believers.

> *And (as for) those who believed and fled and struggled hard in Allah's way, and those who gave shelter and helped, these are the believers truly; they shall have forgiveness and honorable provision.* **8:74**

This is the provision for those who were unable to go but provided food, clothing, shelter, or other means of assistance to the armies.

> *And (as for) those who believed afterwards and fled and struggled hard along with you, they are of you; and the possessors of relationships are nearer to each other in the ordinance of Allah* **8:75**

If, after the battle has been fought, the enemy decides to convert, they should be offered full rights as Muslims and welcomed as "possessors of relationships" with the Islamic community. The preceding four verses can be divided into those who believed by did not help (72), those who are not believers at all and are the enemy (73), those who are "believers truly" (74), and those who were converted at a later time (75). These examples of conduct in battle, along with other concepts such as treaties, prisoners of war, and booty, offer insight into the Muslim conduct of warfare as a direct result of the Battle of Badr.

The Hadith & Badr

The *hadith* is a collection of narrations or deeds attributed to Muhammad and are seen as a companion to the Quran. The *hadith* is considered as further detailing the proper lifestyle for Islamic society and

are tools for understanding what the Quran says (but not necessarily an interpretation) for matters of jurisprudence, history, or law. They are generally classified into different categories based on their authenticity and relationship to Muhammad. Each *hadith* contains the authority for which it was written, or whom the saying was attributed to, followed by the actual saying or action it references. Through the history of Islamic civilization, the *hadith* have undergone rigorous evaluation by esteemed Muslim scholars in determining their validity or authenticity. Furthermore, the two main denominations of Islam, Shi'ism and Sunnism, have their own sets of *hadith* which they deem more authentic than others.

This study uses Sahih Bukhari's *hadith,* since within scholarly circles the ninth century Persian's collection is generally regarded as the most accurate and most widely accepted.[62] Of the approximately 9,000 *hadith* written by Bukhari, Badr is referenced directly or indirectly 143 times. Many are repetitious and do not have much relevance to the battle itself. However, they do describe conduct based on what took place there. One such example is from volume 1, book 4, number 241 with the reference to some major Quraysh tribal leaders killed at Badr. Muhammad spoke to them after they were killed in battle:

> *Narrated 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud:*
>
> Once the Prophet was offering prayers at the Ka'ba. Abu Jahl was sitting with some of his companions. One of them said to the others, "Who amongst you will bring the abdominal contents (intestines, etc.) of a camel of Bani so and so and put it on the back of Muhammad, when he prostrates?" The most unfortunate of them got up and brought it. He waited till the Prophet prostrated and then placed it on his back between his shoulders. I was watching but could not do anything. I wish I had some people with me to hold out against them. T hey started

---

[62] The *hadith* used here was excerpted from M. Mushin Khair, "Translation of Sahih Bukhari," Muslim Students Association, University of Southern California, http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/bukhari

laughing and falling on one another. Allah's Apostle was
in prostration and he did not lift his head up till Fatima
(Prophet's daughter) came and threw that (camel's
abdominal contents) away from his back. He raised his
head and said thrice, "O Allah! Punish Quraish." So it
was hard for Abu Jahl and his companions when the
Prophet invoked Allah against them as they had a
conviction that the prayers and invocations were accepted
in this city (Mecca). The Prophet said, "O Allah! Punish
Abu Jahl, 'Utba bin Rabi'a, Shaiba bin Rabi'a, Al-Walid
bin 'Utba, Umaiya bin Khalaf, and 'Uqba bin Al Mu'it (and
he mentioned the seventh whose name I cannot recall).
By Allah in Whose Hands my life is, I saw the dead bodies
of those persons who were counted by Allah's Apostle in
the Qalib (one of the wells) of Badr.

This particular event occurs repeatedly in Bukhari's collection. The
seven leaders mentioned towards the end are seen again through this
recording from volume 2, book 23, number 452:

Narrated Ibn 'Umar:

The Prophet looked at the people of the well (the well in
which the bodies of the pagans killed in the Battle of Badr
were thrown) and said, "Have you found true what your
Lord promised you?" Somebody said to him, "You are
addressing dead people." He replied, "You do not hear
better than they but they cannot reply."

This alludes to Muhammad speaking to the various Quraysh clan leaders
who were killed in the battle, asking them if their pagan religion was
correct or if they were, in fact, burning in the eternal fire. Muhammad
addresses the skeptic saying that the dead can indeed hear them, but,
since they have been doomed, they have no means of reply. The
following repetitious hadith found in volume 5, book 59, number 314
further enunciates Muhammad's purpose for speaking to the dead while
their fate is clarified in number 319:

Narrated Abu Talha:

On the day of Badr, the Prophet ordered that the corpses of twenty four leaders of Quraish should be thrown into one of the dirty dry wells of Badr. It was a habit of the Prophet that whenever he conquered some people, he used to stay at the battle-field for three nights. So, on the third day of the battle of Badr, he ordered that his she-camel be saddled, then he set out, and his companions followed him saying among themselves, "Definitely he (i.e. the Prophet) is proceeding for some great purpose." When he halted at the edge of the well, he addressed the corpses of the Quraish infidels by their names and their fathers' names, "O so-and-so, son of so-and-so and O so-and-so, son of so-and-so! Would it have pleased you if you had obeyed Allah and His Apostle? We have found true what our Lord promised us. Have you too found true what your Lord promised you?" 'Umar said, "O Allah's Apostle! You are speaking to bodies that have no souls!" Allah's Apostle said, "By Him in Whose Hand Muhammad's soul is, you do not hear, what I say better than they do." (Qatada said, "Allah brought them to life (again) to let them hear him, to reprimand them and slight them and take revenge over them and caused them to feel remorseful and regretful.")

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas:

regarding the Statement of Allah:—"Those who have changed Allah's Blessings for disbelief." (14.28) The people meant here by Allah, are the infidels of Quraish. ('Amr, a sub-narrator said, "Those are (the infidels of) Quraish and Muhammad is Allah's Blessing. Regarding Allah's Statement: "and have led their people Into the house of destruction? (14.29) Ibn 'Abbas said, "It means the Fire they will suffer from (after their death) on the day of Badr."

The following *ahadith*[63] provide some baselines and further clarifications on future conduct in war derived directly from the battle. On collecting booty and its distribution from volume 3, book 40, number 563 and volume 5, book 59, number 357:

Narrated Husain bin Ali:

---

[63] ahadith is the plural form of hadith.

Ali bin Abi Talib said: "I got a she-camel as my share of the war booty on the day (of the battle) of Badr, and Allah's Apostle gave me another she-camel. I let both of them kneel at the door of one of the Ansar, intending to carry Idhkhir on them to sell it and use its price for my wedding banquet on marrying Fatima. A goldsmith from Bam Qainqa' was with me. Hamza bin 'Abdul-Muttalib was in that house drinking wine and a lady singer was reciting: "O Hamza! (Kill) the (two) fat old she camels (and serve them to your guests)."

Narrated Qais:

The Badr warriors were given five thousand (Dirhams) each, yearly. 'Umar said, "I will surely give them more than what I will give to others."

On prisoners of war from volume 4, book 52, number 252 and book 53, number 367:

Narrated Jabir bin 'Abdullah:

When it was the day (of the battle) of Badr, prisoners of war were brought including Al-Abbas who was undressed. The Prophet looked for a shirt for him. It was found that the shirt of 'Abdullah bin Ubai would do, so the Prophet let him wear it. That was the reason why the Prophet took off and gave his own shirt to 'Abdullah. (The narrator adds, "He had done the Prophet some favor for which the Prophet liked to reward him.")

Narrated Jubair bin Mutim:

The Prophet talked about war prisoners of Badr saying, "Had Al-Mutim bin Adi been alive and interceded with me for these mean people, I would have freed them for his sake."

On providing forgiveness for not participating in battle from volume 4, book 53, number 359 and volume 5, book 59, numbers 287 and 291:

Narrated Ibn 'Umar:

'Uthman did not join the Badr battle because he was married to one of the daughters of Allah's Apostle and she was ill. So, the Prophet said to him. "You will get a reward and a share (from the war booty) similar to the reward and the share of one who has taken part in the Badr battle."

Narrated Kab bin Malik:

I never failed to join Allah's Apostle in any of his Ghazawat except in the Ghazwa of Tabuk. However, I did not take part in the Ghazwa of Badr, but none who failed to take part in it, was blamed, for Allah's Apostle had gone out to meet the caravans of (Quraish), but Allah caused them (i.e. Muslims) to meet their enemy unexpectedly (with no previous intention).

Narrated Al-Bara:

I and Ibn 'Umar were considered too young to take part in the battle of Badr.

On martyrdom and the placement of the warriors who fought at Badr, and subsequent *jihad,* from volume 4, book 52, number 64 and from volume 5, book 59, number 318 and 327:

Narrated Anas bin Malik:

Um Ar-Rubai'bint Al-Bara', the mother of Hartha bin Suraqa came to the Prophet and said, "O Allah's Prophet! Will you tell me about Hartha?" Hartha has been killed (i.e. martyred) on the day of Badr with an arrow thrown by an unidentified person. She added, "If he is in Paradise, I will be patient; otherwise, I will weep bitterly for him." He said, "O mother of Hartha! There are Gardens in Paradise and your son got the Firdausal-ala (i.e. the best place in Paradise)."

Narrated Anas:

Hartha was martyred on the day (of the battle) of Badr, and he was a young boy then. His mother came to the Prophet and said, "O Allah's Apostle! You know how dear Hartha is to me. If he is in Paradise, I shall remain

patient, and hope for reward from Allah, but if it is not so, then you shall see what I do?" He said, "May Allah be merciful to you! Have you lost your senses? Do you think there is only one Paradise? There are many Paradises and your son is in the (most superior) Paradise of Al-Firdaus."

Narrated Rifaa:

Gabriel came to the Prophet and said, "How do you look upon the warriors of Badr among yourselves?" The Prophet said, "As the best of the Muslims." or said a similar statement. On that, Gabriel said, "And so are the Angels who participated in the Badr (battle)."

On God's role and the divineness of their cause in battle from volume 4, book 52, number 64, volume 5, book 59, number 330, and volume 6, book 60, number 133:

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas:

The Prophet, while in a tent (on the day of the battle of Badr) said, "O Allah! I ask you the fulfillment of Your Covenant and Promise. O Allah! If You wish (to destroy the believers) You will never be worshipped after today." Abu Bakr caught him by the hand and said, "This is sufficient, O Allah's Apostle! You have asked Allah pressingly." The Prophet was clad in his armor at that time. He went out, saying to me: "Their multitude will be put to flight and they will show their backs. Nay, but the Hour is their appointed time (for their full recompense) and that Hour will be more grievous and more bitter (than their worldly failure)." (54.45-46) Khalid said that was on the day of the battle of Badr.

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas:

The Prophet said on the day (of the battle) of Badr, "This is Gabriel holding the head of his horse and equipped with arms for the battle."

Narrated Abdullah (bin Masud):

On the day of Badr, Al-Miqdad said, "O Allah's Apostle! We do not say to you as the children of Israel said to

Moses, 'Go you and your Lord and fight you two; we are sitting here, (5.24) but (we say). "Proceed, and we are with you." That seemed to delight Allah's Apostle greatly.

On treating nonbelievers who convert to Islam during battle from volume 5, book 59, number 354:

Narrated 'Ubaidullah bin 'Adi bin Al-Khiyar:

That Al-Miqdad bin 'Amr Al-Kindi, who was an ally of Bani Zuhra and one of those who fought the battle of Badr together with Allah's Apostle told him that he said to Allah's Apostle, "Suppose I met one of the infidels and we fought, and he struck one of my hands with his sword and cut it off and then took refuge in a tree and said, "I surrender to Allah (i.e. I have become a Muslim),' could I kill him, O Allah's Apostle, after he had said this?" Allah's Apostle said, "You should not kill him." Al-Miqdad said, "O Allah's Apostle! But he had cut off one of my two hands, and then he had uttered those words?"Allah's Apostle replied, "You should not kill him, for if you kill him, he would be in your position where you had been before killing him, and you would be in his position where he had been before uttering those words."

There are other examples in the *hadith* that shed light on the confluence of culture, politics, and religion at Badr. For example, the importance of the Aqaba agreements is found in the following *hadith.* It appears how critical it really was to the loosely formed coalition Muhammad had built when a member stated, "I would not like to have attended the Badr battle [were it not for] that 'Aqaba pledge"[64] The same exchange is found in a later *hadith* by the same narrator, where he "witnessed the night of Al-'Aqaba (pledge) with Allah's Apostle when we pledged for Islam, and I would not exchange it for the Badr battle although the Badr battle is more popular amongst the people than it (i.e.

[64] Volume 5, book 58, number 229.

Al-'Aqaba pledge)."[65] The cultural aspect is present, too, in the form of the newfound *ummah* fighting against previously established clans aligned along blood lines. When one of the Quraysh tribal leaders was near death he was reported as saying, "You should not be proud that you have killed me nor I am ashamed of being killed by my own folk."[66]

It is critical to understand the significance of Badr in the Islamic religion. To have an entire section of Holy Scripture devoted to it as well as the belief in divine intervention are two factors that should indicate its particular importance. Similarly, no other religious text devotes such attention and space to a single battle as the Quran does to Badr. Beyond that, thinkers and ideologues throughout history have used these events and scriptures to their advantage. The thesis will now examine some key radicals in Islamic history and analyze how they have used Badr to further their messages.

---

[65] Volume 5, book 59, number 702.
[66] Volume 5, book 59, number 298.

Chapter 4

Radical Islamic Leaders and Badr

Every verse in the Quran in which Allah urges the believers to jihad, and explains its desirability, and harshly criticizes those who turn away from it and neglect it, all of that constitutes a condemnation of cowardice.

—Ibn Taymiyyah

God willed that this battle would be the criterion that separates the truth from falsehood, and that it be a landmark in the line of Islamic history, and consequently in human history. He willed that this battle should show the great gulf between what people may plan for themselves, believing it to serve their best interests, and what God chooses for them, even though they may think little of it at first sight. He wanted the emerging Muslim community to properly learn the factors that bring victory and those that bring defeat, receiving these directly in the battlefield, from none other than God, their Lord and protector.

—Sayyid Qutb, Shades of the Quran

Badr's significance in Muslim history is partly explained by how it is used by later generations in their speeches and writings. This chapter details how radical Islamic extremists have used the battle within their rhetoric to further their ideological argument or terrorist cause. It will analyze what Ibn Taymiyyah, Sayyid Qutb, Osama bin Laden, and Ayman al-Zawahiri have said about the battle in their various speeches and writings. The analysis will look at specific uses of the battle along with some of the general themes already presented, including martyrdom, the defense of the *ummah,* and courage.

Recent scholarship places Badr as part of a greater master narrative of Islamist extremism.[1] One work in particular identifies 12 narratives in Islam's history that have been used or manipulated by

---

[1] See Halverson, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism.*

various radical extremists. The authors collected over 500 texts, statements, and interviews to discover 12 correlated story forms to go along with the narratives.[2] Their main argument concerning Badr is that its "master narrative tells the story of the weak triumphing over the mighty through divine favor or decree."[3] Along this line of thinking, Islamists have used Badr to exhort their followers to have faith (through the deliverance story form) in God to overcome their perceived material deficiencies. The prime example is Muhammad's accomplishments with his small force against an overwhelming Quraysh army. As the discussion below demonstrates, courage and deliverance are not the only story forms Islamists have used when invoking the Battle of Badr.

Ibn Taymiyyah

Heralded as one of the founders for modern radical Islamic extremism, thirteenth-century scholar Ibn Taymiyyah (1268—1328) laid the foundation for successive generations. According to a West Point Combating Terrorism study, Ibn Taymiyyah is the "most influential Medieval Authority [on Islam.] Aside from the Qur'an and the *hadith*, the *fatwas* by this 13/14th cent[ury] AD jurist are by far the most popular texts for modern Jihadis."[4] He established some of the guiding precepts

---

[2] The narratives and their associated story forms are: Pharaoh (Conflict with God), *Jahiliyyah* (Deliverance), Battle of Badr (Deliverance), Hypocrites (Ruse), Battle of Khaybar (Betrayal), Battle of Karbala (Noble Sacrifice), *Shaytan's* (Satan) Handiwork, (Ruse), Seventy-two Virgins (Noble Sacrifice), Mahdi (Deliverance), Crusader (Invasion), Tatar (Mongol Invasion), 1924 (Ruse), *Nakba* (Palestine; Deliverance). See Halverson, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism,* 184-185.

[3] Halverson, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism,* 49.

[4] Militant Ideology Atlas, Executive Report (West Point, New York: Combating Terrorism Center, November 2006), 7. The report analyzed various *jihadist* writers through history and uses a technique called "citation analysis" to determine the most influential authors among ideologues. They are further broken down into medieval and modern, hence the assignment to Ibn Taymiyya as the most influential *medieval* authority. The report continues to say that the most cited facet was "his writings about the invading Mongols. These texts are important to the modern Jihadi movement because 1) Ibn Taymiyya is the most respected scholar among Salafis, 2) he crafted very good arguments to justify fighting a jihad against the foreign invaders, and 3) he argued that Mongol rulers who converted to Islam were not really Muslims. The last two arguments resonate well today with the global Jihadi agenda."

and principles for others who followed him, like Qutb, bin Laden, and Zawahiri. His influence crosses many ideological bounds, as he is "quoted by liberals, conservatives, and extremists alike."[5]

Ibn Taymiyyah was born in Damascus, Syria and lived during one of the most tumultuous times in Islamic history. By the age of 19, he was a professor of Islamic Studies and wrote over 350 books and articles.[6] He was soon recognized as an expert in *hadith* explanation, *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), Arabic grammar, and scholastic theology.[7] His education was through the Hannibal School of Law, considered the most conservative form of the four Sunni legal schools.[8] The 37 volumes he produced on Islamic law earned him the title "Shaykh al-Islam" and widespread respect among contemporary leaders. He was widely known as a "political figure as well as Islamic scholar" and was very active in the struggle against the Mongol occupiers.[9]

The Mongol invasion and subsequent occupation had remarkable influence on Taymiyyah's thoughts and writings. Imprisoned many times, he maintained that, because the Mongols still followed their own legal code (Yassa), they "were no better than the polytheists of pre-Islamic *jahiliyyah*."[10] Even though the Mongol rulers had supposedly converted to Islam, they were still considered non-Muslims and guilty of apostasy. He exhorted other Muslim believers to understand this critical factor, and said that the *ummah* living by *Sharia* law "alone promises stability and permanence amid the [transitory nature] of the political

[5] John L. Espisito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 45.

[6] Richard Bonney, *Jihad: From Quran to Bin Laden* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 111.

[7] Bonney, *Jihad: From Quran to Bin Laden*, 111.

[8] Bonney, *Jihad: From Quran to Bin Laden*, 111. The other 3 are Hanafi, Maliki, and Shafi'i.

[9] Espisito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, 45.

[10] Espisito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, 46.

organization in the form of a caliphate."[11] In other words, the only way for Muslims to live was through an established caliphate, separate from earthly laws.

Even though Taymiyyah was well versed in Islamic law, he taught more about the religious and moral elements of *jihad* rather than the mere legalistic issues related to the course of war.[12] To do this, Taymiyyah called for a rigorous, literalist interpretation of the sacred sources based primarily on the Quran, Sunnah (Muhammad's sayings and deeds), and the example of the early Muslim community.[13] He regarded the early Muslims as the model for subsequent behavior. Muhammad and his companion's example helped him craft moral virtues for *jihad* against the Mongol invaders of his time. He calls *jihad* "unequalled by other subjects" for three reasons:

> 1) The benefit of *jihad* is general, extending not only to the person who participates in it but also to others, both in a religious and in a temporal sense
> 2) *Jihad* implies all kinds of worship, both in its inner and outer forms. More than any other act it implies love and devotion for God.
> 3) All creatures must live and eventually die, and *jihad* is the best of all manners of dying[14]

This moral foundation for *jihad* allowed him to use Islam's religious facets for his political gains.

Taymiyyah's greatest accomplishments against the Mongols, and perhaps his most lasting contribution today, lie in fusing religion with politics for his contemporary audience. This ability in "combining ideas and action, his belief in the interconnectedness of religion, state, and society has exerted both conscious and unconscious influence" on

---

[11] Bonney, *Jihad: From Quran to Bin Laden*, 112.

[12] Rudolph Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996), chapter 5.

[13] Espisito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, 46.

[14] Ibn Taymiyyah, *The Religious and Moral Doctrine on Jihad*

modern extremists.[15] Johannes Jansen calls Taymiyyah the "dominant authority in the modern debate on Islam and politics."[16] This is a theme strikingly familiar to the events surrounding the Battle of Badr.

According to Taymiyyah, the "most serious type of obligatory *jihad* is the one [waged] against the unbelievers."[17] This was the offensive portion of *jihad*, prescribed to Muslims after Muhammad's emigration to Medina through the following Quranic revelation:

> *Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them;* **22:39**

This offensive *jihad* was a collective duty with responsibility to the entire *ummah* to participate until it is "fulfilled by a sufficient number" of Muslims.[18] God prescribed this type of fighting to Muhammad and his 300 at the Battle of Badr. Taymiyyah invokes this verse to energize the Muslim community to carry the fight to the Mongol invaders. Furthermore, he cites the following Quranic revelation, from the time immediately after Badr, to show how the need to fight in self defense was a requirement that did not have an expiration date:

> *[I]f they seek aid from you in the matter of religion, aid is incumbent on you except against a people between whom and you there is a treaty* **8:72**

The former, or offensive, *jihad* was a voluntary form of fighting that was seen at Badr. The latter form, or defensive, of *jihad* could also be an example of what happened at Badr, because Muhammad was forced out of his original home and used religion as a rallying cry for his cause.

---

[15] Espisito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, 45.

[16] Johannes J.G. Jansen, *Dual Nature of Islamic Fundamentalism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 33.

[17] Ibn Taymiyyah, *The Religious and Moral Doctrine of Jihad.*

[18] Ibn Taymiyyah, *The Religious and Moral Doctrine of Jihad.*

Taymiyyah's work, *Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong*, is a plea to fellow believers on what their proper conduct should be.[19] Consistent with his other writings, he extols Muhammad's time on earth as having "complete[d] the qualities of good character" for the *ummah* to emulate.[20] Taymiyyah reminds the Muslims that they have been ascribed the same characteristics as Muhammad, and their institution is upheld through *jihad*. Once again, Taymiyyah tells his audience that "enjoining right is a collective obligation . . . not an obligation upon every single individual Muslim, rather upon them as a group."[21] Muhammad used this same concept as a political motivator through the Constitution of Medina and the meetings at Aqaba. By leveraging societal norms, like tribal solidarity, he made the fight at Badr a collective duty, much like Taymiyyah is advocating against the Mongols. Taymiyyah is simply using the same methods Muhammad used, as "most Muslims and most orientalists agree that the political and religious spheres were not separate in the golden age of Islam, the period of Muhammad."[22]

Exactly who constituted the enemy for Muhammad was relatively easy. The Quraysh oppression in Mecca made a clear distinction between them and Muslims as non-believers, placing the former in the *Dar al-Harb*. Taymiyyah, too, had an easy time identifying the enemy as stated above. He cites Quranic verses that blame the *ummah* for not "forbidding wrong" among those they live with, including their so-called

---

[19] For another look at how important the Prophet's example was to Tamiyyah's writing, see Ibn Taymiyyah, *The Madinian Way: The Soundness of the Basic Premises of the School of the People of Madina* (Norwich: Bookwork, 2000).

[20] Ibn Taymiyyah, *Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong*, translated by Salim Abdallah ibn Morgan. Accessed from http://www.kalamullah.com/Books/Enjoining%20Right%20and%20forbidding%20wrong.pdf 31 March 2011. 3. Taymiyyah further makes his point when he says, "The most reliable Speech is the Book of God, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad . . ." Quoted in Johannes J.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1986), 160.

[21] Ibn Taymiyyah, *Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 3.

[22] Johannes J.G. Jansen, *Dual Nature of Islamic Fundamentalism*, 12.

Islamic rulers.[23] Nevertheless, Taymiyyah did more than just place the Mongols into the *Dar al-Harb* and the believers into *Dar al-Islam*. He essentially created a third category of Muslims, those who believe "that they are in obedience to Allah when in reality they are transgressors of His boundaries."[24] He further outlined this thought in his Mardin *fatwa*:

> As to whether it is [*Dar al-Harb*] or [*Dar al-Islam*], it is a composite situation. It is not [*Dar al-Islam*] where the legal rulings of Islam are applied and its armed forces are Muslim. Neither is it the same as [*Dar al-Harb*] whose inhabitants are unbelievers. It is a third category. The Muslims living therein should be treated according to their rights as Muslims, while the non-Muslims living there outside of the authority of Islamic Law should be treated according to their rights.[25]

In order to fight the non-believers and non-Muslim rulers, Taymiyyah reminded his readers about Badr and the Quranic verses dealing with it. By invoking Badr, he calls on believers to exhibit courage, since cowardice is "frequently criticized in the Quran and the Sunnah."[26] Taymmiyya continues with this theme and cites four Quranic verses related to Badr. "Every verse in the Quran in which Allah urges the believers to jihad, and explains its desirability, and harshly

---

[23] See, for example: "You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in Allah; and if the followers of the Book had believed it would have been better for them; of them (some) are believers and most of them are transgressors." **3:110** And (as for) the believing men and the believing women, they are guardians of each other. **9:71**

[24] Ibn Taymiyyah, *Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 10.

[25] Ibn Taymiyyah, *Mardin Fatwa*. Translated by Shaykh Abd al-Wahhab al-Turayri in a recent article during a Mardin Conference, 29 June 2010. This conference was an attempt to clarify Taymiyyah's *fatwa* outlining the status of the Mongol invaders. Shaykh al-Turayri's article is found at http://muslimmatters.org/2010/06/29/the-mardin-conference-%E2%80%93-a-detailed-account/ and accessed 31 March 2011. For the opposing view, see https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_121123_43/content/Display/GMP20100428342002#index=1&searchKey=4885720&rpp=10 accessed 31 March 2011.

[26] Ibn Taymiyyah, *Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 41.

criticizes those who turn away from it and neglect it, all of that

constitutes a condemnation of cowardice."[27]

> And whoever shall turn his back to them on that day
> [Badr]—unless he turn aside for the sake of fighting or
> withdraws to a company—then he, indeed, becomes
> deserving of Allah's wrath, and his abode is hell; and an
> evil destination shall it be **8:16**
>
> How often has a small party vanquished a numerous host
> by Allah's permission, and Allah is with the patient.
> **2:249**
>
> O you who believe! when you meet a party, then be firm,
> and remember Allah much, that you may be successful.
> And obey Allah and His Messenger and do not quarrel for
> then you will be weak in hearts and your power will
> depart, and be patient; surely Allah is with the patient.
> **8:45-46**

The theme of Taymiyyah's writing is fighting the unbelievers and any

apostate regime. To do this, he "had to develop a theory that justified

fighting against other Muslims."[28] He used the Battle of Badr rhetoric to

encourage the *ummah*. Taymiyyah reminded them that, even though the

ummah did not necessarily want to do it, they should follow

Muhammad's example. As discussed earlier, even at the Battle of Badr,

brother fought against brother and father against son. The same might

have to happen again in order to establish Islamic rule in Taymiyyah's

time.

Sayyid Qutb

Sayyid Qutb saw similarities in the Egyptian society of his time

and the conditions present during the Mongol invasion. He subsequently

built on Taymiyyah's concepts. Qutb was born to a middleclass family in

Upper Egypt and moved to Cairo in 1920 to finish his education at Dar

al-ʿUlum. He eventually rose through the government system and

---

[27] Ibn Taymiyyah, *Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 44.
[28] Bonney, *Jihad: From Quran to Bin Laden*, 111.

became a teacher and inspector for the Egyptian Ministry of Education. In 1948, Qutb left Egypt for the United States on an educational tour that would last almost two years. While in the United States, he experienced the post-World War Two American economic and cultural boom. This familiarization greatly influenced his later writings and radicalization, as he experienced first-hand the stark contrasts of American and Islamic societies. When he came back to Egypt, he joined the Muslim Brotherhood and became one of their leading ideologues. The Brotherhood was trying to establish an Islamic state in Egypt based on *Sharia* law.[29]

When he returned from his American cultural experience, his writings started to turn radical. The murder of more than 20 Brotherhood members spurred this radicalization.[30] Already in prison, Qutb began publishing more works with increased extremist rhetoric. His first work on Islamic life, published in 1949, *Social Justice in Islam*, had little extremist expression attached to it. Indeed, he began writing a commentary on the Quran while in prison and published other books on Islamic religious thought.[31] However, by 1964 he had been in prison over 10 years and started smuggling out articles on Islamic extremism. These articles would turn into a radical Islamic manifesto, called *Milestones*. In the summer of 1965, an assassination attempt on Egyptian President Gamel al Nasser led to Qutb's arrest. Qutb was

---

[29] Numerous biographies, dissertations, and articles have been written about Sayyid Qutb's life. This brief sketch has been based primarily on Ali Rahnema, editor, *Pioneers of Islamic Revival* (New York: Zed Books, 1994), William E. Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Doubleday Publishing Group, 2006), Adnan A. Musalum, *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islam* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2005), and Luke Loboda, *The Thought of Sayyid Qutb,* Unpublished Thesis, (Ashland: Ashland University, 2004).

[30] Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism*, xvii.

[31] See for example, *Islam and Universal Peace* (1951), *Islamic Concept and its Characteristics* (1962), and *In the Shade of the Quran* (1952-1965; he would eventually write 29 volumes covering the entire Quran).

accused of having a major role in the plot, and Nasser took the opportunity to put him back into prison. By this time, Qutb had been gaining widespread support among the Egyptian population. During the trial, *Milestones* was used as evidence against him, revealing that he was attempting to overthrow the Egyptian government by force. He was found guilty of sedition and hanged on 29 August 1966.[32]

Qutb, like Ibn Taymiyyah before him, saw the world as black and white, Islam and infidel. The dominant theme emanating from his radicalized writings is a criticism of everything non-Muslim. Society had regressed back into *jahiliyyah,* ignoring God's revelations to Muhammad, because "these characteristics vanished at the moment the laws of God became suspended on earth."[33] Qutb cites the same lines in the Quran (3:110) Taymiyyah recorded on how the Muslim *ummah* was supposed to uphold right and wrong. The Muslim community had to be revived, because it was "buried under the debris of the man-made traditions of several generations."[34] This was very much like the *jahiliyyah* Muhammad had to overcome, when he emigrated to Badr. The similarities between Muhammad, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Qutb in this description of an age of ignorance are striking.

There are other parallels to Badr and the early Islamic community. In order to bring the current age out of this new *jahiliyyah,* Qutb dedicated the first edition of *Social Justice in Islam* "to the youth whom I behold in my imagination coming to restore this religion as it was when it began."[35] Islam's restoration had to have no new interpretations, and must be without corruption by man-made desires. There is no other form of Islam, "it is simply plain Islam as it was understood by its first

---

[32] Rahnema, *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, 165.

[33] Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Damascus, Syria: Dar al-Ilm), 9.

[34] Qutb, *Milestones*, 9.

[35] Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam.* Quoted in Shepard, lxi. All further citations from *Social Justice in Islam* will be from Shepard.

adherent, Muhammad."[36] He further drives home the point in *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics*. Muslims in Qutb's era had drifted from the Quran. They needed to live like the "first group of Muslims [who] molded their lives" in an honorable way, and had "the leadership of mankind . . . bestowed upon them."[37]

The responsibility to lead the *ummah* out of *jahiliyyah* was given to a vanguard, which "sets out with this determination and then keeps on walking on the path."[38] This vanguard has direct parallels with the Badr fighters. They were the ones who led the *ummah* through the persecution at Mecca and helped establish Muhammad's dominance in the region. They led, through force, their Medinian counterparts through the original *jahiliyyah,* and Qutb is calling for a similar reaction. Qutb calls his fellow Muslims to remember their history, which "has preserved from its beginnings and from its later ages, and of all those occurrences and events that one almost takes as fables invented by a soaring imagination rather than as true events that once actually happened and were remembered" by his contemporary generation.[39] The most significant event in Islam's history to be remembered is the Battle of Badr.

Qutb mentions Badr in his writings much more frequently than Ibn Taymiyyah.[40] Presumably, this is because Qutb was more interested in finding the vanguard to take on his mission, which he saw coming to an end as he remained in prison.[41] Beyond the need for a vanguard,

---

[36] Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, 9.

[37] Sayyid Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics*, Translated by Mohammed Moinuddin Siddiqui, (Plainfield, IN: American Trust Publications, 1991), 2.

[38] Qutb, *Milestones*, 12.

[39] Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, 183.

[40] This does not even include his commentary on the Sura in the Quran that deals with Badr.

[41] The need for a vanguard had already been established by Sayed Abul Ala Maududi in his Islam and the West; Maududi equated the need for an Islamic revolution with the Marxist one. It is not surprising that first Maududi, and then Qutb, equated Lenin's vanguard of the revolution with Muhammad and his companions.

Qutb saw Badr as God's ultimate example for divine intervention in man's lives, particularly in battle. He quotes the Quran, reminding his readers "the truth of His saying" and how it is necessary to follow what God's plan is regardless of their own understanding.[42] Unlike Taymiyyah, who used Badr as a call for courage in battle against the overwhelming power of the Mongols, Qutb used Badr to remind them to follow God's plan out of *jahiliyyah.*

God's will was not the only thing in which Qutb was interested in. He believed that change required action. Like Taymiyyah, he divided the earth into *Dar al-Harb* and *Dar al-Islam* and used the fighters at Badr as his example of how to react against hostile worlds.[43] He did not agree with the third division Taymiyyah identified, and called on Muslims around him to fight or emigrate if they were living within an apostate regime like Egypt. When Muhammad emigrated, he established the *ummah* to the exclusion of all other relationships. This new "tribal" relationship should be emulated among contemporary Muslims, according to Qutb, "and this brotherhood was not a mere word but a living tie on a par with the blood tie."[44] In fact, Qutb makes it very clear that blood ties are not nearly as important as living under the Islamic banner, when the soldiers at Badr "became like brothers, even more than blood relatives."[45] Qutb called for militant action by the *ummah,* through remembering what Muhammad did over a thousand years ago and

---

[42] Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics*, 4. Qutb cites 3:123 in the Quran: And Allah did certainly assist you at Badr when you were weak; be careful of (your duty to) Allah then, that you may give thanks.

[43] Qutb, *Milestones*, 118. Qutb cites 8:72-75 of the Quran, cited earlier as evidence on how to have relations with "the rest of the world."

[44] Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, 199.

[45] Qutb, *Milestones*, 123. "We see that the blood relationships between Muhammad . . . and his uncle Abu Lahab and his cousin Abu Jahl were broken, and that the Emigrants from Mecca were fighting against their families and relatives and were in the front lines of Badr, while on the other hand their relations with the Helpers of Medina became strengthened on the basis of a common faith. . . This relationship established a new brotherhood of Muslims which were included Arabs and non-Arabs."

another ideologue, in the form of Osama bin Laden, would repeat the call in a different way.

Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri

Professor Muhammad Qutb, Sayyid's brother, was a teacher and mentor to the young Osama Bin Laden. Bin Laden combined his extensive financial resources with Ayman al-Zawahiri's ideological mentorship to form the radical Islamic terrorist movement Al-Qaeda.[46] Qutb's writings provided bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri with the philosophical framework to build Al-Qaeda's rhetoric.[47] In fact, Zawahiri says Qutb "became an example of sincerity and adherence to justice" in his struggle to overthrow the Egyptian regime.[48] As leaders of Al Qaeda, bin Laden and Zawahiri wrote extensively on energizing the base against a common enemy.

Zawahiri is a licensed Egyptian doctor and has been conducting radical activities since he was fourteen.[49] He provided the intellectual bridge bin Laden had trouble grasping and "managed to introduce drastic changes to [bin Laden's] philosophy" throughout their relationship.[50] Originally, bin Laden was uninterested and undistinguished in academic and theological matters.[51] Instead, he decided to pursue entrepreneurial interests, in order to establish his place in his family's construction business. Since he lacked interest in ideological debates, bin Laden had to look elsewhere to receive guidance.

---

[46] Loboda, *The Thought of Sayyid Qutb,* 3. See also Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader* (Broadway Books: New York, 2007), xxvii.

[47] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 27 August 2004, 80.

[48] Ayman Al Zawahiri, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner,* translated by Laura Mansfield in, *His Own Words: Translation and Analysis of The Writings of Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri* (TLG Publications: Minnesota, 2006), 49.

[49] Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader,* 1.

[50] Montasser al-Zayyat, *The Road to Al-Qaeda: The Story of Bin Laden's Right-Hand Man*, translated by Ahmed Fekry, edited by Sara Nimis (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 68.

[51] Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 94.

According to Wright, "bin Laden revered [Imam Abdullah] Azzam, who provided a model for the man he would become."[52] Azzam was a central figure for the foreign *jihadist* movement in Afghanistan in its efforts to combat the Soviet invasion in the late 1980s. He wrote a book entitled *Join the Caravan,* where he laid out the "many reasons" urging fellow Muslims to wage *jihad.*[53] Azzam mentions Badr by telling his audience to "fear the fire" by ensuring they come to the help of fellow Muslims.[54] He recounts one of Bukahri's *hadith,* where Muslims went on the side of the Quraysh, were subsequently killed in the melee, and now "deserve[d] Hell" for swelling the "ranks of the [d]isbelievers."[55] Furthermore, Azzam provides the following account from a battle in Afghanistan through Arsalaan, an eyewitness:

> The [Soviet] tanks attacked us and they were about one hundred and twenty in number. They were assisted by mortar and many aircrafts. Our provisions were exhausted. We were convinced of being captured. . . All of a sudden, bullets and shells rained upon the Communists from all directions. They were defeated. There was no one on the battlefield besides us. He said: "They were the *Mala'ikah* (angels)." Arsalaan also narrated to me: "We attacked the Communists at a place called Arjoon and we killed five hundred and captured eighty-three." We said to them: "Why is it that you people were defeated, whereas you people killed only one martyr?" The prisoner said: "You people were riding on horses, and when we shot at them they ran away and we could not hit them with bullets." It is established from

---

[52] Wright, *The Looming Tower,* 111.

[53] This caravan is strikingly similar to the one outlined above by Qutb. There were 16 "at the head" of his list, which would lead one to think there were much more than he offered here. Fifth on his list was "following in the footsteps of the Pious Predecessors" and eighth was "hoping for martyrdom." Online version available at http://www.religioscope.com/info/doc/jihad/azzam_caravan_1_foreword.htm, accessed 1 May 11.

[54] "Fear of the fire" is third on Azzam's list.

[55] Azzam, *Join the Caravan.*

the Quran that the *Mala'ikah* (angels) descended on the occasion of Badr.[56]

Since Azzam had such a heavy influence on both Zawahiri, who knew him in Cairo, and bin Laden, who worked for him in the Pakistan-based Maktab al-Khadamat (Services Office), it is no surprise they would also use Badr in their rhetoric. In a 1998 interview, later broadcast by al-Jazeera television after the attacks of September 11, 2001, bin Laden stated:

> In the Holy Koran *sura* of *Al-Anfal*, God says, addressing his prophet, may the peace and blessings of God be upon him, and the Badr Battle fighters, who were among the most righteous, may God rest their souls in peace: "Just thy Lord ordered thee out of thy house in truth, even though a party among the believers disliked it. Disputing with thee concerning the truth after it was made manifest, as if they were being driven to death and they (actually) saw it." If this description had applied to the Badr Battle fighters, the most righteous ones, it is only natural to apply to us as well.[57]

Halvorson contends that "Badr has remained a normative reference point for al-Qaeda's vision of its military operations up to the present."[58] This is evident in bin Laden's aforementioned war declaration on America, when he talked about how important the behavior of the young companions were in their actions against Abu Jahl.[59]

---

[56] Abdullah Azzam, *Signs of Ar-Rahman from the Jihad in Afghanistan*, edited by A. B. al-Mehri (Birmingham, UK: Maktabah, n.d.), 36-37. Quoted in Halvorson, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, 54-55.

[57] Translated by Open Source.Gov; Accessed 1 May 11, retrieved from https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_916_314_0_43/content/Display/4023449?highlightQuery=eJxVzsEOgyAMBuBX4ag3WoGuxyU67EFdpsne%2F01WkCylvZavf%2FMzDO58vtF70H14HUJ3fp446eoAF8zbqyE8zbqyEVC10ytGToEHxFsBjruT46BIN5uzFhRaKC0pIMqSbJJhmh9sQeoyJCskWMfP%2FJJPW2FOGEbnRfuVbZnex5Oa9llnn8Aar7Pw8%3D&fileSize=74409

[58] Halvorson, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, 55.

[59] See Introduction, above. Also see the full transcript of "Message From Usamah Bin-Muhammad Bin-Ladin to His Muslim Brothers in the Whole World and Especially in the Arabian Peninusula: Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Mosques; Expel the Heretics From the Arabian Peninsula." Accessed 1

Another indication of Badr's importance to contemporary Islamists is numerological, and in particular, focuses on the number 314.[60] When al-Qaeda was a fledgling organization struggling to find an identity, bin Laden and others met in August 1988 with the aim of keeping the *jihad* alive after the Soviets left Afghanistan.[61] When bin Laden and others finally decided on a suitable time frame, they had to start with a requisite number of individuals. According to notes taken from the meeting, the "initial estimate, within 6 months of al-Qaeda, 314 brothers will be trained and ready."[62] Furthermore, al-Qaeda conducted an attack on the al-Muhaya housing compound in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on November 8th, 2003.[63] Eighteen people were killed, with another 120 injured in the operation. One of the stated goals of the operation was to go after Arab Christians. According to IntelCenter, an open source provider of translations and analysis of al-Qaeda material for the military and law enforcement, this marked an expansion of al-Qaeda's strategy of targeting those who are perceived to be affiliated with governments protecting the enemy.[64] This was a common theme at Badr, where kinship and blood affiliation was set aside for the greater Muslim cause.

As the ideological foundation of al-Qaeda, Zawahiri also invoked Badr in his rhetoric. In trying to continue Qutb's Manichean view of the

---

May 11, retrieved from
https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_10087_314_0_43/content/Display/FTS19960902000438

[60] The reader will recall that this was the estimated number of warriors who fought for the Muslims at Badr.

[61] Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 152.

[62] Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 152.

[63] The operation was titled "Badr al-Riyadh." Al Qaeda operatives released a video of the attacks on February 8th, 2004 detailing some of the preparations and planning for the attack. IntelCenter's report, accessed 1 May 11, can be found at http://www.intelcenter.com/reports-charts.html. See also http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/11/08/saudi.explosion/

[64] IntelCenter report, 4. Bin Laden warned Gulf State governments about an impending attack on January 4th, 2004. See "Bin Ladin Threatens 'Terrible Response' if Death of 2 Saudi Clerics Is Confirmed." Accessed 1 May 11, retrieved from https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_10087_314_0_43/content/Display/GMP20030529000160

world, he reminded his audience of the fact that brother fought against brother and father against son at Badr.[65] In another attempt to justify killing fellow kinsmen in the name of a united *ummah,* Zawahiri references the Quranic verses mentioned in Chapter 3 above. Specifically, 8:38-39 are used to "call upon every officer and solider . . . to disobey the orders of his commanders to kill Muslims."[66]

Synthesis and Analysis

As the previous discussion on radical extremists show, the use of Badr as a rhetorical device has been a significant tool for energizing their audience and furthering their cause, by providing a concrete example from history of a decisive battle at a pivotal point in Islamic history. There are, however, some limitations to its use and power in rhetoric. With notable exceptions, like the "Badr al-Riyadh" operation on Saudi Arabia and Zawahiri's use of *sura* 8:38, there is very little talk on Badr by al-Qaeda after September 11th. It seems the extensive use of the event by Taymiyyah and Qutb to energize the *ummah* against a common enemy was very effective as a device. However, at a certain point it faded from prominence in both the speeches and proclamations by bin Laden and Zawahiri.[67]

---

[65] Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," 81. The full text from Zawahiri: "The verse containing God Almighty's words 'even though they were their fathers' was revealed after Abu 'Ubaidah killed his own father during the Battle of Badr, 'or their sons' refers to Abu Bakr al-Siddiq's killing of his own son, 'Abd al-Rahman, 'or their brothers' refers to Mus'ab Bin Umayr's killing of his brother Ubayd Bin Umayr on the same day, 'or their kindred' refers to Umar's killing of a blood relative on that day also, and to the fact that Hamza, 'Ali, and Ubaydah Bin al-Harith killed Atabah, Shaybah, and al-Walid Bin Atabah on that day. But God knows best." Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Allegiance and Disavowal" (December, 2002), quoted in Halvorson, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, 54. The *sura* Zawahiri references is 58:22.

[66] Mansfield, *In His Own Words*, 335-336.

[67] There are many works available on bin Laden and Zawahiri's writings and speeches. See, for example OpenSource.gov's extensive collections on bin Laden found at https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/community/bin_ladin/314 and on Zawahiri at https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/community/al-zawahiri/746. See also *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (New York: Verso, 2005), edited by Bruce Lawrence, translated by James Howarth; *Al Qaeda in its Own Words* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), Edited by Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, translated by Pascale Ghazaleh;

The common thread among all these writers is their audience. In most cases, they are aiming their message at fellow Muslims. Consequently, once an enemy became identifiable (Mongols for Taymiyyah and America for Qutb, bin Laden, and Zawahiri) the use of Badr as a rallying cry became much less important for their cause. Azzam does not use Gabriel's miraculous entry to the battlefield to make the Soviets afraid or back down from Afghanistan. Instead, it is aimed at the *mujahideen* to continue their cause in the face of overwhelming odds. Similarly, Zawahiri does not need to tell the American president about how it is okay to kill fellow kinsmen. This message's aim is the *ummah,* because of the importance family and kinship ties have in their society. It can therefore be concluded that Badr's primary significance to these ideologues is as an internal device to unite the *ummah* against a common enemy. With the death of Osama bin Laden, it is highly likely that his successor will at some point continue to use the battle to rally and encourage the faithful.

Jerrold M. Post, M.D., editor, *Military Studies in the Jihad against the Tyrants: The Al-Qaeda Training Manual* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: USAF Counterproliferation Center, 2004); *The Al-Qaeda Documents: Volume 1* (Alexandria, VA: Tempest Publishing, 2002); Berner, Brad, *The World According To Al Qaeda* (New York: Peacock Books, 2006);

Conclusion

This thesis began with a discussion on the mechanisms for creating decision in war. Multiple viewpoints were presented from various military theorists in military history. These viewpoints offered ideas on what each theorist identified as the mechanism for decision. Clausewitz, for example, suggested that destruction of an enemy's forces was required while Sun Tzu offered that strategic advantage was truly decisive. Other theorists, such as Jomini and Liddell Hart, took a more operational approach and emphasized different levels of maneuver to place military forces in a position to effect decision. Theorists of other domains or forms of war, such as Corbett, Douhet, and Mao, suggested that battle must serve a different purpose in order to be decisive, by attacking or influencing lines of communication, industrial infrastructure, and the civilian population. The analysis of these various theories assesses that Clausewitz had it more correct than others. In particular, the most compelling mechanism to achieve decision rested with the destruction of the enemy's fielded forces. This ensured that an enemy no longer possessed the means to resist the imposition of one's will upon them.

Chapter One turned from a theoretical foundation to what academic scholars have identified as the criteria for identifying decisive battle. Of all authors, Sir Edward Creasy remains the capstone; his remarkable history provides the baseline criteria for evaluating particular battles and gauging their decisiveness, a work that still remains unparalleled. However, Creasy's criteria, though necessary, are insufficient to judge a battle like Badr. Therefore his criteria were combined with the ideas of Colin Gray and Paul Davis to assess Badr's decisiveness in a more comprehensive manner. These hybrid criteria include determining the cause of a particular battle while tracing its effects to future events. There also must be significant social and political change by contemporary and future societies to be decisive.

Finally, there should also be some level of operational, strategic, and political decisiveness involved with a particular battle.

In order to satisfy the above criteria, the thesis turned to the context and causes surrounding Badr in Chapter Two. A brief discussion on the social and political situation facing Muhammad was presented as a departure point. The environment, or geographical factors, provided the key characteristics of the nomadic lifestyle in seventh-century Arabia. This nomadic lifestyle drove peculiar tribal relationships, and norms of fighting, that were key to Muhammad's political career. He was able to leverage tribal politics and various cultural norms to further political and religious goals. Cultural concepts such as fate, martyrdom, honor, and revenge were all key ingredients to Muhammad's early successes in Medina.

Chapter Three explored the course and consequences of the Battle of Badr, by setting the stage in greater geographic detail of the aera of the battle itself. In particular, it answered the question "why was the battle fought at Badr and not somewhere else?" The chapter then turned to the specific events leading to the engagement, such as Muhammad's numerous raids, the impact of one specific raid at Nakhla, and economic considerations stemming from the Muslims' precarious situation in Medina. The battle narrative tied in some thematic elements from the previous chapter. It showed how Muhammad leveraged the ideas of martyrdom, tribal solidarity, and political affiliation to military success. One dominant theme throughout was the ability of Muhammad to cut through tribal and kinship affiliations and unite the *ummah* under one cause. The impact Badr has on the Muslim religion cannot be overstated. The mere fact that an entire *sura* of the religion's holy text is devoted to the engagement should be enough to cement its place as a decisive battle in Islamic history.

Since there is so much in the Quran and *hadith* devoted to Badr, it is no surprise radical Islamic extremists have used the event in their

political rhetoric. Ideologues such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Sayyid Qutb, Osama Bin Laden, and Ayman al-Zawahiri eached leveraged Badr's thematic elements for their own cause as Chapter Four illustrates. The clear thread running through all of them was in its use as an esoteric rather than exoteric device. Much of the non-Muslim world is relatively unaware of what happened in 624, but the continued use of Badr by these radicals shows that this battle has a degree of importance as a means of rallying others to their cause. By pointing to an event in Islamic history where faith, going on the offensive, triumphed over superior odds these radicals have used the Battle of Badr to further their causes.

Badr as a Decisive Battle

Muhammad's mechanism for decision was the Quraysh fielded forces, and Muhammad focused his efforts on the battle. However, it did not appear that was his original intention. The following Quranic verse suggests his original aim was at thwarting Abu Sufyan's lines of communication for economic advantage:

> And when Allah promised you one of the two parties that it shall be yours and you loved that the one not armed should be yours and Allah desired to manifest the truth of what was true by His words and to cut off the root of the unbelievers. **8:7**

In order to create a decision at Badr, it was necessary to have a violent clash of military forces. Abu Jahl recognized this fact and encouraged his army to press on.[1]

Operational decisiveness was achieved, when it became apparent to the Quraysh forces they were losing the initial skirmishes. Even after the initial one-on-one challenges, the ensuing melee was filled with Muslim victories. This was possible due to their religious zeal, rallied through Muhammad's promises of martyrdom. At the strategic level,

---

[1] See Chapter 3 above.

Badr was decisive for Muhammad and the nascent Islamic faith, because it combined with other raids that were aimed at securing continued economic advantages. After Badr, Muslim forces could no longer be seen as just groups of nomadic bandits. They had to be reckoned with as a standing military force that would continually threaten other powers. Badr also provided another decisive advantage in that it significantly enhanced Muhammad's legitimacy and prestige in the region. His preachings would be taken much more seriously by a wider audience. The Battle of Badr was a launching point for establishing Islam as a world religion. It served as a transition from defensively oriented warfare to a more offensive, expansionist phase. Furthermore, the battle provided radical ideologues with a common cultural viewpoint to rally their audience in order to further their cause.

Today scholars have attempted to explain the significance of Badr within the overall context of the Islamic religion or as a part of the overall life of Muhammad. Bashumail says "it is not only one of the decisive battles of Islamic history but was also the first serious confrontation between the forces of Islam and those of unbelief."[2] George Nafziger mentions that "this engagement is also described as the first *jihad,* or holy war, because it was an aggression by infidels who were intent on the destruction of Islam and the Muslims."[3] Watt, who followed his comprehensive two-part biography on Muhammad with a book on the critical role he played as a statesman, said, "It would be a mistake, however, to think of Badr simply as a political event. For Muhammad and his followers it had a deep religious meaning."[4] Gabriel's conclusions, in his more recent scholarly work on the military history of Muhammad, are similar to Watt's when he says that "Muhammad's men had adopted the new religious community as a replacement for their

---

[2] Bashumail, *The Great Battle of Badr,* 78.
[3] Nafziger, *Islam at War: A History*, 6.
[4] Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman,* 125.

loyalties to clan and kin" and this *ummah* would be the basis for future wars, as realized in the concepts of *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*.[5]

There are other reactions to the Battle of Badr from Muslim writers that are important in understanding its significance to Islamic thought and jurisprudence. One such author claims that "The Battle of Badr proved that God had blessed the Messenger" and "after Badr, Muhammad was no longer a mere *Shaykh* or a *Hakam*; he and his followers were now the new political power in the Hijaz."[6] Another says that "such inspiration [of the warriors at Badr] was enough for the role models of Islam, the names that echo in Muslim hearts" and further noted that "the Battle of Badr is known as *furqan*, or the first trial between good and evil."[7]

There are numerous Islamic websites which attempt to establish Badr as "the first great battle in the history of Islam" while remembering "those who participated in it were granted honor and grace by Almighty Allah."[8] Another calls it "much more than just an historical battle in the history of Islam" but a "very complex lesson on many different Islamic and humanitarian issues . . . full of divine revelation and mystical and miraculous events."[9] While it seems impossible to conjecture the fate of the Islamic religion based on one circumstance, one web site states "had victory been the lot of the pagan army while the Islamic Forces were still at the beginning of their developments, the faith of Islam could have come to an end."[10]

---

[5] Gabriel, *Islam's First Great General,* 93.

[6] Aslan, *No god But God,* 88.

[7] Akbar, *The Shade of Swords,* 9, 18.

[8] http://www.islamonline.net/English/ramadan/1425/hopespringseternal/Ramadan%20Victories/11.shtml. Accessed 1 Apr 10.

[9] http://shiaonline.wordpress.com/2006/10/02/lessons-taken-from-the-battle-of-badr/, Accessed 1 Apr 10.

[10] http://www.al-islam.org/history/history/badr.html, Accessed 1 Apr 10.

The Master Narrative of Badr

Badr is a decisive battle in Islamic history and is being used by radical extremists to further their cause. Halvorson argues that master narratives are "*used strategically* in rhetorical acts that seek to persuade audiences to align their personal narratives in support of particular goals."[11] Is there anything that can be done to dissuade its use, or be used for strategic advantage by those seeking to defeat militant Islamism? Does this knowledge allow a better prediction of what future ideologues will say? Halvorson offers five principles to help counter these types of narratives.[12] Most of what Halvorson offers deals strictly with how to combat the Crusade narrative. The following discussion takes the five principles he offers and applies them to the Badr narrative.

The first principle is to avoid reinforcing the narrative. In the crusade narrative, for example, President George W. Bush's 2001 remark correlating the war on terrorism with a crusade only reinforced the concept in the Muslim world that Al Qaeda's actions were a religious war. In the Badr narrative, extremists are using it to unite the Muslim world against everyone else. This creates the impression of an "us-versus-them," uncompromising struggle in which only one side can prevail. By playing into this narrative, extremists are able to elevate the legitimacy of their cause. This in turn has led to the recruiting of individuals to defend the faith against American "crusader" forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. Western strategic communications should continue to

---

[11] Halvorson, *Master Narratives of Islamic Extremism*, 191. Emphasis in original.

[12] Halvorson, *Master Narratives of Islamic Extremism*, 195-205. Halvorson caveats his prescription, saying "it is important to note that there is little profit in trying to contest the master narratives themselves, or the rhetorical vision that they weave. Master narratives develop over long periods of time and are deeply embedded in culture. Accordingly, the same is true of the rhetorical vision they create. It is no more feasible to convince Muslims that they have no internal and external enemies than it is to convince Americans that they live in the land of the enslaved and the home of the cowardly. . . .Strategic efforts to contest the master narratives of Islamic extremism must therefore focus on the bottom end of the vertical hierarchy, where the master narratives are invoked in rhetorical acts—arguments—that make them relevant to the personal narratives of the audience."

disassociate Islam or its population as the target and focus our efforts on enemies within established international norms.

The second principle is to contest the analogy of the original narrative with contemporary events. As in the Crusades, leaders should not invoke a historical example that has little to no bearing on current events. The situation at Badr provides ample material to aid in contrasting those events with contemporary ones. For example, Muhammad frequently garnered political support from non-Muslims in treaties and conventions like the Aqaba meetings. He almost always had leading Jewish tribes under his influence, suggesting there are practical advantages to siding with someone, even though their religious beliefs do not coincide with your own. Muhammad's actions at Badr show the current struggle does not have to be a Manichean one.

A third principle for dealing with the Badr narrative is by decompressing time. By decompressing time, many facts from religious narratives are conveniently left out. Radical extremists have the "mistaken idea that the proper way to do history is to prune away the dead branches of the past" and relate only the good parts of what happened.[13] Similar to contesting the analogy above, knowing details of the narrative events helps determine which ideas are being left out and which ones need to be put straight.

The fourth principle is very significant with relation to Badr. It is the idea that "master narratives [are dependent] on binary oppositions."[14] One potential way to combat this binary exclusion of good versus evil at Badr is to see it not as an either/or proposition, but rather as a both/and one. In other words, Muhammad was not *only* concerned with religious expansion. Although that was a significant result, *sura* 8:7 quoted above indicated the pragmatic realities behind the battle through

---

[13] David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 135.

[14] Halvorson, *Master Narratives of Islamic Extremism*, 201.

economic reasoning. The oppression the early Muslims felt in Mecca that forced them to emigrate to Medina can certainly be viewed as religious subjugation. But maybe there were economic struggles and a lack of political opportunity that were more important to the individual at the lower end of the vertical hierarchy, and these concerns trumped spiritual desires.

Finally, recasting the archetypes that are already part of the strategic narrative may help turn the situation into an unfavorable one for the enemy. For example, if bin Laden is casting himself as a reputable Muslim scholar, it would behoove American policy makers to discredit that claim. Similarly, his move to the caves of Afghanistan at the "nadir" of his career can erroneously be likened to Mohammad's *hijra* before Badr.[15] Wright further emphasizes how bin Laden "consciously molded himself on certain features of the Prophet's life" to include fasting, clothing, and even eating in the same position.[16] This sort of behavior should not be emphasized in our enemy, as it only extenuates their perceived importance and enhances the "us-versus-them" aspect of a potential religious fight.[17]

Badr represents the transition point of a small, disenfranchised religion in the Arabian Desert into an inherently offensive and worldwide faith with far reaching consequences. This transition incorporated preexisting cultural factors such as fate, retribution, and aggression with established political alliances, manifested in the Constitution of Medina and the Aqaba agreements, into a religiously-based holy war to expand

---

[15] Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 263. Wright notes, "but in spiritual terms it recapitulated a critical moment in the Prophet's life when, in 622, ostracized and ridiculed, he was expelled from Mecca and fled to Medina."

[16] Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 263-264.

[17] Two works by Bernard Lewis highlight the "us-versus-them" struggle in the modern Middle East. His *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East* (New York, New York: Shocken Books, 1998) is an internal look at the difficulties of uniting under a common banner. His *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) contrasts Islamic identity issues with trying to modernize.

the Muslim faith. After Badr, "warring in the path of God was now required virtually without restriction" and every Muslim now incorporated into the *ummah* was required to take part in it.[18]

---

[18] Firestone, *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam*, 114.

Bibliography

Academic Papers

Loboda, Luke. *The Thought of Sayyid Qutb.* Unpublished Thesis.
   Ashland: Ashland University, 2004.

Articles

al-Zayyat, Montasser. *The Road to Al-Qaeda: The Story of Bin Laden's
   Right-Hand Man.* Translated by Ahmed Fekry, Edited by Sara
   Nimis. London: Pluto Press, 2004.

'Arafat, W. "The Historical Significance of Later Ansari Poetry," *Bulletin of
   the School of Oriental and African Studies* 29 (1966): 1-11.

Azzam, Abdullah. *Join the Caravan.* Online version available at
   http://www.religioscope.com/info/doc/jihad/azzam_caravan_1_fo
   reword.htm.   (accessed 1 May 2011)

Azzam, Abdullah. *Signs of Ar-Rahman from the Jihad in Afghanistan.*
   Edited by A. B. al-Mehri. Birmingham, UK: Maktabah, n.d.

Denny, Frederick M.   "Ummah in the Constitution of Medina," *Journal of
   Near Eastern Studies* 36 (Jan., 1977): 39-47.

Faizer, Rizwi S. "Muhammad and the Medinian Jews: A Comparison of
   the Texts of Ibn Ishaq's Kitab Sirat Rasul Allah with al-Waqidi's
   Kitab al-Maghazi," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28
   (Nov., 1996): 463-489.

Firestone, Rueven. "Disparity and Resolution in the Quranic Teachings
   on War: A Reevaluation of a Traditional Problem," *Journal of Near
   Eastern Studies* 56 (Jan., 1997): 1-19.

Handel, Michael I. "Corbett, Clausewitz, and Sun Tzu" in *Naval War
   College Review.* Autumn, 2000.
   http://www.nwc.navy.mil/press/Review/2000/autumn/art7-
   a00.htm (accessed 1 May 2011).

Homerin, T. Emil. "Echoes of a Thirsty Owl: Death and Afterlife in Pre-
Islamic Arabic Poetry," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44 (Jul., 1985):
165-184.

Jones, J.M.B. "The Chronology of the 'Maghazi'- A Contextual Survey,"
   Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 19 (1957):
   245-280.

Jones, J.M.B. "Ibn Ishaq and al-Waqidi: The Dream of Atika and the
   Raid to Nakhla in Relation to the Charge of Plagarism," *Bulletin of
   the School of Oriental and African Studies* 22 (1959): 41-51.

Salzman, Philip Carl. "The Middle East's Tribal DNA," *Middle East
   Quarterly,* 15 (2008): 23-33.

Serjeant, R.B. "The 'Sunnah Jami'ah," Pacts with the Yathrib Jews, and
   the 'Tahrim' of Yathrib: Analysis and Translation of the Documents

Comprised in the So-Called 'Constitution of Medina,'" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41 (1978): 1-42.

Wiktorowicz, Quintan. "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 27 August 2004.

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. "Maghazi and the Muhaddithun: Reconsidering the Treatment of 'Historical' Materials in Early Collections of Hadith," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28 (Feb., 1996): 1-18

Books

Aaron, David. *In Their Own Words: Voices of Jihad.* RAND Corporation, Santa Monica CA: 2008.

Akbar, M. J. *The Shade of Swords: Jihad and the Conflict Between Islam and Christianity.* London: Routledge, 2002.

Al-Qaeda's "Badr al-Riyadh" Video—Version 1.1. IntelCenter Tempest Publishing: 2004. http://www.intelcenter.com/Badr-al-Riyadh-v1-1.pdf

Armstrong, Karen. *Muhammad: A Prophet For Our Time.* New York: Harper Collins, 2006.

Armstrong, Karen. *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet.* New York: Harper Collins, 1992.

Aslan, Reza. *No god But God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam.* New York: Random House, 2005.

Bashumail, Muhammad Ahmad. *The Great Battle of Badr.* New Delhi, India: Islamic Book Service, 1999.

Bell, Richard. *Introduction to the Quran.* London: Edinburgh University Press, 1953.

Bell, Richard. *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment.* London: MacMillan and Company, 1926.

Black, Jeremy, ed. *70 Great Battles in History.* London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 2005.

Bonner, Michael. *Jihad in Islamic History.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Bonney, Richard. *Jihad: From Qur'an to Bin Laden.* New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Boot, Max. *Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power.* New York, NY: Basic Books, 2003.

Boston, Andrew G., M.D., Editor. *The Legacy of Jihad: Islamic Holy War and the Fate of Non-Muslims.* Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2008.

Brynjar, Lia. *Architect of Global Jihad : The Life of al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri.* Columbia University Press: New York, 2008.

Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War.* Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Corbett, Julian S. *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy.* Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1911.

Creasey, Edward S. *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World: From Marathon to Waterloo.* New York, New York: DeCapo Press, 1851.

Crompton, Samuel Willard. *100 Battles That Shaped World History.* San Mateo, California: Bluewood Books, 1997.

Dahmus, Joseph. *Seven Decisive Battles of the Middle Ages.* Nelson-Hall Inc.: Chicago, 1983.

Davis, Paul K. *100 Decisive Battles.* Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 1999.

Donner, Fred McGraw. *The Early Islamic Conquests.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Douhet, Giulio. *The Command of the Air.* Translated by Dino Ferrari, edited by Joseph Patrick Harahan and Richard H. Kohn. Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1942.

Enan, Muhammad Abdullah. *Decisive Moments in the History of Islam.* New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2001.

Esposito, John L. *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Espisito, John L. *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Falahi, Towqueer Alam. *The Quranic Concept of War and Peace.* New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, Distributors, 2004.

Firestone, Rueven. *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Fischer, David Hackett *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought.* New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Fuller, J.F.C. *The Decisive Battles of the Western World and Their Influence Upon History.* 3 Volumes. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1954.

Gabriel, Richard A. *Muhammad: Islam's First Great General.* Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007.

Gibb, H. A. R. ed., et al. *The Encyclopedia of Islam,* 2nd ed. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960.

Gray, Colin S. *Defining and Achieving Decisive Victory.* Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, April 2002.

Guevara, Che. *Guerrilla Warfare.* Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1985.

Halvorson, Jeffry R., H.L. Goodall, Jr., and Steven R. Corman. *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism. New* York, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010.

Hamidullah, Muhammad. *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad.* Hyderabad: Deccan, 1973.

Hanson, Victor Davis. *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power.* New York: Random House, 2001.

Hart, Liddell. *The Decisive Wars of History.* 3 Volumes. London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd, 1929.

Hart, B.H. Liddell. *Strategy.* New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1954.

Humble, Richard. *Famous Land Battles: From Agincourt to the Six-Day War.* Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1979.

Huntington, Samuel. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.* New York, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.

Ibn Ishaq. *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Life of Muhammad.* Translated by Alfred Guillaume. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Ibn Khaldun. *The Muqaddimah.* Translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal. Edited and abridged by N. J. Dawood. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967.

Ibn Taymiyah, Taqi al-Din Ahmad. *The Religious and Moral Doctrine of Jihad.* Birmingham: Maktabah Al Ansaar Publications, 2001. http://www.allaahuakbar.net/scholars/ibn_taymiyyah/ibn_taymiyyah_on_jihaad.htm (accessed 1 May 2011).

Ibn Taymiyah, Taqi al-Din Ahmad. *Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong,* translated by Salim Abdallah Ibn Morgan. www.islambase.co.uk. (accessed 1 May 2011).

Ibn Taymiyah, Taqi al-Din Ahmad. *The Madinian Way: The Soundness of the Basic Premises of the School of the People of Madina.* Bookman: Norwich, 2000.

Ibn-al Naqib, Ahmad ibn Lu'lu'. *Reliance of the Traveler: A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law.* Edited and Translated by Nuh Ha Mim Keller. Maryland: Amana Publications, 1991.

Ibrahim, Raymond, Editor and Translator. *The Al Qaeda Reader.* New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2007.

Jansen, Johannes. *The Dual Nature of Islamic Fundamentalism.* Cornell University Press: New York, 1997.

Jansen, Johannes. *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East.* Macmillan: New York, 1986.

Jomini, Baron Antoine-Henri. *The Art of War*, translated by Captain G.H. Mendell and Lt. W.P. Craighill. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 2007.

Karsh, Efraim. *Islamic Imperialism: A History.* Yale University Press, 2006.

Keegan, John. *A History of Warfare.* New York: Random House, 1993.

Kepel, Gilles and Milelli, Jean-Piere, ed., *Al-Qaeda in its Own Words*, translated by Pascale Ghazaley. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Kohn, George Childs, ed. *Dictionary of Wars.* New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1999.

Lacey, Jim. *A Terrorist's Call to Global Jihad : Deciphering Abu Musab al-Suri's Islamic Jihad Manifesto.* Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, MD, 2008.

Laffin, John. *Brassey's Battles: 3,500 Years of Conflict, Campaigns, and Wars From A to Z.* London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, Ltd., 1986.

Lawrence, Bruce, Ed. *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, translated by James Howarth. New York, NY: Verso, 2005.

Lewis, Bernard. *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East.* New York, New York: Shocken Books, 1998.

Lewis, Bernard. *The Shaping of the Middle East.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Lewis, Bernard. *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Libicki, Martin C. *Conquest in Cyberspace: National Security and Information Warfare.* New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Lynn, John. *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture.* Colorado: Westview Press, 2003.

Maalouf, Amin. Translated by Jon Rothschild. *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes.* New York: Schocken Books, 1984.

Macdonald, John. *Great Battlefields of the World.* New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1984.

Mahan, Alfred Thayer. *Mahan on Naval Strategy: Selections From the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan.* Edited by John B. Hattendorf. Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute Press, 1991.

Mahan, Alfred Thayer. *Retrospect and Prospect: Studies in International Relations Naval and Political.* Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902.

Malik, S. K. *The Quranic Concept of War.* Karachi: Wajidalis, 1979.

Mao Tse-Tung. *On the Protracted War.* Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1960.

Markov, Walter, ed. *Battles of World History.* New York: Hippocrene Books, 1979.

McCallister, William S. *COIN and Irregular Warfare in a Tribal Society.* Applied Knowledge International, 2007.

Musalum, Adnan A. *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islam.* Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2005.

Nafziger, George F. *Islam at War: A History.* Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2003.

The Oxford Dictionary of Islam. www.oxfordislamicstudies.com.
    (accessed 1 May 2011)

The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World.
    www.oxfordislamicstudies.com. (accessed 1 May 2011)

Paret, Peter, ed. *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the
    Nuclear Age.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press,
    1986.

Perrett, Bryan. *The Battle Book: Crucial Conflicts in History from 1469 BC
    to the Present.* London: Arms and Armor Press, 1992.

Peters, F. E. *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam.* Albany: State
    University of New York, 1994.

Peters, Rudolph. *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam.* Princeton, New
    Jersey: Markus Wiener, 1996.

Post, Gerald M., M.D., Ed. *Military Studies in the Jihad Against the
    Tyrants: The Al-Qaeda Training Manual.* Maxwell AFB Press,
    Alabama: August 2004.

Qutb, Sayyid. *Basic Principles of the Islamic Worldview.* Translated by
    Rami David. Islamic Publications International, New Jersey: 2006.

Qutb, Sayyid. *Islam and Universal Peace.* American Trust Publications:
    Indianapolis, 1993.

Qutb, Sayyid. *The Islamic Concept and its Characteristics.* Translated by
    Mohammed Moinuddin Siddiqui. Plainfield, IN: American Trust
    Publications, 1991.

Qutb, Sayyid. *Milestones.* American Trust Publications: Indianapolis,
    1990.

Qutb, Sayyid. *Shades of the Quran.* Volume VII, Sura 8
    http://www.kalamullah.com/Books/Fi%20Dhilal/Volume_7_(sura
    h_8).pdf. (accessed 1 May 2011)

Rahnema, Ali, Ed. *Pioneers of Islamic Revival.* New York: 1994.

Ramadan, Tariq. *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons From the Life of
    Muhammad.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Regon, Geoffrey. *Guinness Book of Decisive Battles.* New York: Canopy
    Press, 1992.

Ringgren, Helmer. *Studies in Arabian Fatalism.* Uppsala: A.B.
    Lundequistska, 1955.

Schelling, Thomas C. *Arms and Influence.* New Haven: Yale University
    Press, 1966.

Seymour, William. *Decisive Factors in 20 Great Battles of the World.* New
    York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.

Shepard, William B. *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and
    Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam.* New York: 1996.

Simpkin, Richard. Deep *Battle: The Brainchild of Marshal Tukhachevskii.*
    London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1987.

Slessor, John C. *Air Power and Armies.* Tuscaloosa, Alabama:
    University of Alabama Press, 2009.

Sun Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War*, translated by Samuel B. Griffith.
    Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Tedder, Alfred W. *Air Power in War.* Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of
    Alabama Press, 2010.

Wansbrough, John E. *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of
    Scriptural Interpretation.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Watt, W. Montgomery. *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman.* Oxford:
    Oxford Press, 1961.

Watt, W. Montgomery. *Muhammad at Mecca.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1953.

Watt, W. Montgomery. *Muhammad at Medina.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1956.

Weigley, Russell Frank. *The Age of Battles: The Quest for Decisive
    Warfare from Breitenfeld to Waterloo.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana
    University Press, 1991.

Weigley, Russel. *American Way of War: A History of United States Military
    Strategy and Policy.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press,
    1977.

Weir, William. *50 Battles That Changed the World: The Conflicts That
    Most Influenced the Course of History.* New Jersey: Career Press,
    Franklin Press, 2001.

Winter, Tim, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology.*
    Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Wright, Lawrence. *The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11.*
    New York: Doubleday Publishing Group, 2006.

Zawahiri, Ayman. *His Own Words: Translation and Analysis of Dr.
    Ayman Al Zawahiri.* Translated by Laura Mansfield. TLG
    Publications: New Jersey, 2006.

Zawahiri, Ayman. *IntelCenter Words of Ayman Al Zawahiri.* IntelCenter
    Tempest Publishing: 2008.

Zeitlin, Irving M. *The Historical Muhammad.* Cambridge, UK: Polity,
    2007.

Government Documents

The Al-Qaeda Documents, Volume 1. IntelCenter Tempest Publishing:
    2002.

The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission
    on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. New York, NY: W.W.
    Norton and Company, 2004.

Reports

Militant Ideology Atlas, Executive Report. West Point, New York:
    Combating Terrorism Center, November 2006.

IntelCenter Report on Al-Qaeda Operation "Badr al-Riyadh." Available online at http://www.intelcenter.com/reports-charts.html. (Accessed 1 May 2011)