Muhammad Iqbal's Pacifist Ethics and Global Peace in the Post-9/11 World

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Abstract

This article fosters the significance of Muhammad Iqbal's pacifist ethics in the post-9/11 world. In the post-9/11, there emerged a new world order in which violence emerged in many guises, including terrorism and war, which has devastated global peace since the advent of the twenty-first century. Undeniably, the threat of a nuclear war has been constantly harassing the world. Under these atrocious conditions, the question is whether Iqbal's pacifist ethics could help achieve and sustain global peace. Iqbal was an empirically informed and trained philosopher in the early twentieth century in the Western and Islamic traditions. He witnessed the First World War and identified the factors of the Second World War, which had started just a year after his death. Iqbal identified that materialistic interests and colonial and imperial exploitations cause conflicts, eventually leading to violence and war. The recurrent problem is how we avoid the Third World War to sustain global peace. Iqbal's ethics offer two ideas for achieving global peace: reverence for humanity and human fraternity. Reverence for humanity helps develop human potential, which promotes creative activities vital for positive peace. Human fraternity is the only dependable unity among human beings, despite their particular races, colours, cultures, or languages, for acquiring global peace. The article thus demonstrates the relevance and significance of Iqbal's ethics in achieving and sustaining a peaceful co-existence in the world.

Keywords: ethics, global peace, terrorism, violence, human fraternity, Iqbal, Muslim philosophy.

1. Introduction

This article demonstrates Muhammad Iqbal's pacifist moral and political philosophy for acquiring and sustaining global peace. Global peace is central to human survival, social justice, and the living of good human lives. Iqbal is an ardent humanist philosopher in the Islamic tradition. Fazlur Rahman states, "Iqbal's philosophical legacy has, therefore, not been followed, partly because of what he has said but largely because he has been both misunderstood and misused by his politics-mongering followers."[1] I agree with Fazlur Rahman that some theorists believe Iqbal is outdated, irrelevant, or supports war rather than peace. I argue that Iqbal is still relevant and significant, and he denounces war and promotes peace. In "The Geopolitics of Peace in a Post-Western World (2023), Jeffrey Sachs states, "Iqbal, as a great thinker and philosopher, as well as a poet, offered the goal of Islam as a message for all humanity, not just the message for the believers. He argued that we need to search for rational foundations in science and Islam."[2] Sachs' inference that Iqbal insists on the search for a rational foundation for science and Islam has scope for human progress and peaceful co-existence. In a letter to Reynold A. Nicholson, an English orientalist, Iqbal endorsed Lowe Dickinson's claim that "war is destructive, whether it is waged in the interests of truth and justice or in the interests of conquest and exploitation. It must be put an end to in any case."[3] Some may wrongly infer from Iqbal's poetry that he promotes conflicts and war. Iqbal is still significant for promoting reason and science in the Muslim world and establishing and sustaining global peace.

Iqbal strives to emancipate humanity from poverty, war, violence, humiliation, discrimination, exploitation, hatred, and destruction.[4] Although Iqbal does not develop a systematic theory of pacifism, his moral and political ideas are promising for achieving peace in the world. According to Iqbal, the cause of confrontation, violence, and war worldwide is the materialistic outlook toward life. Despite unprecedented scientific and technological human progress, Iqbal states, "the tyranny of imperialism struts abroad, covering its face in the masks of Democracy, Nationalism, Communism, Fascism, and heaven knows what else besides. Under these masks, in every corner of the earth, the spirit of freedom and the dignity of man are being trampled underfoot in a way in which not even the darkest period of human history presents a parallel. The so-called statesmen to whom government and leadership of men were entrusted to have proved

demons of bloodshed, tyranny, and oppression."[5] So, Iqbal rightly envisions that lust for material gains causes bloodshed, tyranny, and oppression.

2. Why Global Peace Matters

Bertrand Russell, awed and horrified by the looming threat of nuclear holocaust at the start of the Cold War, on July 9, 1955, penned *The Russell-Einstein manifesto* (so-named because Einstein was among its co-signatories), in which he wrote: "There lies before us, if we choose, continual progress in happiness, knowledge, and wisdom. Shall we, instead, choose death because we cannot forget our quarrels? We appeal, as human beings to human beings: *remember your humanity and forget the rest* [Italic added]. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, nothing lies before you but universal death."[6] In the sixty-eight years since Russell wrote these lines, we have not met the fate of universal death he feared, nor have we arrived at the paradise of global peace he spoke of. Far from it, large parts of the Earth remain broiled in conflict, and the threat of universal death still hangs over us like the Sword of Damocles.

Violence is an appalling global problem which needs to be resolved. In *Approaches to Peace* (2018), David P. Barash states, "Despite the enormous ills of our planet, there is reason to believe that our most pressing problem is not hunger, disease, poverty, social inequity, overpopulation, or environmental degradation but rather the violence that human beings commit and threaten commit against others."[7] Barash's claim is correct that the most pressing problem of the twenty-first century is global violence. In the same line of Barash's argument, Amartya Sen writes, "Questions of violence and insecurity are omnipresent in the world around us. If peace is in our dreams, war and violence are constantly in our eyes and ears, and their terrible role in generating human insecurity is recognized across the world."[8] Barash and Sen highlight the detrimental effects of violence. So, violence must be eradicated from the world.

Like Barash and Sen, Bruce Mazlish and Brian Barry show the cruelty of violence. Mazlish states that the "Possible extinction of humankind as a result of some of the factors entering into the present-day globalization - the nuclear threat, environmental dangers, the spread of disease - hovers over the species and presses us to think of the subject of that extinction."[9] Similarly, in *Why Social Justice Matters* (2005), Brian Barry makes a grave prediction: "It is quite possible that by the year 2100 human life will have become extinct or will be confined to a few residual areas that have escaped

the devastating effects of nuclear holocaust or global warming on a scale that has in the past wiped out almost all existing life forms."[10] Barry's prediction is a warning. Nuclear holocaust and global warming pose severe threats to human survival, and the causes of these threats lie nowhere else but in ourselves and our own behaviour. To *save* ourselves, we need, somehow, to *change* ourselves, to make different types of choices than it has been our habit, or our nature, to make throughout our long and very bloody history.

'Peace' refers to something that provides harmony, serenity, recreation, and contentment and which withholds disorder, horror, destruction, tyranny, and suffering. Johan Galtung, a Norwegian pacifist, states that 'negative peace' means the nonexistence of violence.[11] In eradicating conflicts, clashes, war, and terrorism, we would create a state of negative peace. Positive peace, by contrast, requires "the establishment of life-affirming and life-enhancing values and structures."[12] Positive peace involves not just the cessation of hostilities but the promotion of human development. Peace and human development depend upon each other.[13] There are different ways in which positive peace can be produced. For instance, Sen argues that even playing sports can be a useful way to fight against tyranny, exploitation, or deep inequality because it creates recreation, improves health, stimulates the imagination, and helps free the person's mind from the unhappiness of their situation.[14] Sen's claim is correct. More generally, to promote positive peace, there must be education, art, literature, music, democracy and access to all the activities required to allow each person to reach their full potentials.

Different kinds of evils, such as humiliation, exploitation, discrimination, coercion, and exclusion, challenge global peace. For instance, the Nazi holocaust in the twentieth century and the tragedy of 9/11 at the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in the USA, at the very advent of the twenty-first century, created seismic repercussions in the world. This tragedy gave birth to a spectre of terrorism, which brought about enormous devastation in the world. There started a war on terror in Afghanistan and many other countries. This war on terror made terrorism a global phenomenon.[15] Pakistan, like many other countries, has paid a big cost against it. Hundreds of thousands of Pakistani civilians and security officials have rendered their lives for the war against terrorism. In the entire history of Pakistan, there is no deadliest attack than the Taliban's attack on Army Public School, in Peshawar, on December 16, 2014. At least 148 people, including 132 students, were killed in the attack. Ayesha Siddiqa terms this deadliest attack "Pakistan's 9/11".[16] We currently live with the perpetual threat of a nuclear holocaust which

could wipe out all forms of life on Earth.[17] For example, scholars such as David Krieger and Angela McCrackien indicate that there is a potential threat of nuclear war between India and Pakistan in the future.[18] This threat exists despite the recognised horrors of such wars. In the last century, Bertrand Russell argued that no states have a right to enter into a nuclear war:

> What right does any government have to poison the atmosphere, which is the atmosphere of all people of the world? What would governments say if Pakistanis and Indians in their dispute over Kashmir or Arabs and Israelis in their dispute poisoned the atmosphere of the planet in the course of it? What right do governments anywhere have to make the people of the world hostage to every petty squabble they might entertain? I appeal for a halt to nuclear testing, irrespective of what the other side is prepared to do, on grounds of humanity and in the interest of human survival on this planet.[19]

Russell's concern is genuine because a nuclear war anywhere would poison the global atmosphere. Now, the problem is how to avoid a nuclear holocaust. Unquestionably, a nuclear war would have global consequences. We must stop a nuclear war anywhere in the world for human survival. Nuclear wars in the future can be avoided by resolving conflicts between states, such as the dispute over Kashmir and Palestine.

3. Iqbal's Pacifist Ethics

In the modern Western tradition, the idea of selfish human nature returns to Thomas Hobbes's philosophy. According to Hobbes, human nature is selfish, and people compete to grab resources. Hobbes calls this natural state the state of nature in which human life is nasty, brutish, and short.[20] Iqbal conceives that this selfish behaviour in social life divided humanity into different groups that develop confrontation and war of all against all in the Hobbesian sense. In an Urdu verse, Iqbal articulates: "Greed has divided humanity into different Parts; Create brotherhood and speak the language of love."[21] In the Islamic tradition, Iqbal develops his pacifism. Like Kant's formula of humanity, which holds that treat your humanity and of others as an end, not merely as means[22], Iqbal argues that one should treat others as if they were your brothers (and sisters) irrespective of their race, colour, language, culture, religion or nationality.[23] To sum up, Iqbal's ideas of the unity of humanity and the reverence for humanity lead to peaceful co-existence in the world.

Iqbal developed his pacifist philosophy in the Islamic tradition. The expression 'pacifism' refers to ways of peacemaking. Some scholars use pacifism and pacificism interchangeably.[24] Robert L. Holmes makes a distinction between pacifism and pacificism. According to Holmes, pacifism is "principled opposition to war"[25] while pacificism refers to the "view that war can and should be abolished, whether for moral, religious, political, economic or other reasons."[26] I prefer the expression, pacifism to explain the philosophy of peace. 'Islam' means 'peace'. Islam is a universalist and peace-desiring religion. Iqbal's pacifism brings about peaceful co-existence in Muslim societies and in the world. In general, Iqbal's ethics acquires anti-racialisation, anti-nationalisation, anti-materialisation, anti-colonisation, and anti-imperialisation, for bringing about peaceful co-existence. Iqbal is a cosmopolitan philosopher[27] who envisages a cosmopolitan society in which people can develop their potential into capabilities to create a better world.

Iqbal's moral and political philosophy suggests a drastic overhaul of values in society to establish peaceful co-existence. K. G. Saiyidain expounds Iqbal's pacifist philosophy in the following words: "[T]here can be no peace or security or culture, humanism in the world unless we radically revise our scheme of values and place first things first: creation above the destruction, culture above conflict, cooperation above exploitation and fratricide, quest for vision above the lust for power...Love above everything, as the source of all that is good and great in life."[28] Saiyidain remarkably explicates an overarching argument of Iqbal's pacifism, prioritising creation, culture, cooperation, vision, and love to destruction, conflict, fratricide, narrow-mindedness, blind power, and hatred, respectively. Despite an extensive set of values in Iqbal's pacifist moral and political philosophy for global peace, I will embark on only two pathways to peace: reverence for humanity and unity of humanity.

In Iqbal's philosophy, the first pathway to global peace is the ethics of reverence for humanity.[29] Reverence for humanity is a moral value that has political implications. Reverence rivals arrogance. Arrogance leads to violence, while reverence leads to peace. Thus, there is no such foundational value essential for real civilisation than reverence for humanity. Iqbal argues that human beings deserve reverence because of their distinctive human potentials, including creativity. Saiyidain defends Iqbal's idea of creativity in his classic work, *Iqbal's Educational Philosophy*: "Man's creativity is not confined to the reshaping of matter alone; he has also "the capacity to build a much vaster world in the depths of his own inner being, wherein he

discovers sources of infinite joy and inspiration" – in art and poetry, literature and science, philosophy and religion."[30] I endorse Saiyidain's distinction that creativity recreates the material world and the metaphysics that underpin social life. Moreover, in another significant work, *The Humanist Tradition in Indian Educational Thought,* Saiyidain writes: "The distinctive grace of man is that he alone, of all the living creatures, has become an active participant in the creative activity of his Maker."[31] Creativity is the best capability of human beings. Thus, being the creative agent and God's collaborator in the creation of the universe, human beings are worthy of reverence.

Although Iqbal's entire philosophical corpus strives to defend the idea of reverence for humanity, *Javed Nama,* a Persian epic, presents an excellent exposition. In the poem, Iqbal articulates, "The status of a human being is higher than the heavens; the basis of real civilisation is reverence for humanity."[32] In the verse, Iqbal explains the position of human beings in the universe, on the one hand, and the implication of the idea of reverence for humanity in social life on the other. The human being enjoys a special status in the universe; no other object in the universe is comparable to the human beings. In another quatrain of *Javed Nama*, Iqbal defends the ideas of reverence, social relationships, and human friendship. The first couplet explains: "Reverence for a human being is humanity; Be aware of the status of the human being."[33] Iqbal explicates the idea of humanity and insists on recognising the actual status of humans in the universe. The higher status of humans in the animal world shows that human is not the subject of contempt. Iqbal declares human's higher place due to human distinctive potential. In the second couplet, Iqbal says: "Human beings develop in a firm relationship with each other; Follow the footsteps of friendship."[34] This couplet explains how human potential can be developed and what is required. Iqbal states that people develop their human potential in society: social relationships matter in the human world. Human friendship is a bond underpinning human relationship. According to Iqbal's egohood, this quatrain reveals that the development of ego requires a social milieu. This is the point where Iqbal extends the circle from a personal self to the human self in the unlimited world.

Political power independent of reverence for humanity is devastating. Iqbal conceived that the Western politics (of course, of his time) is devoid of reverence, which is harmful. Khalifa Abdul Hakim states, "Iqbal was one of those few observers of Western civilization who saw also the seamy side of

it. It was a ruthlessly competitive society split up into antagonistic nations bent upon exploiting not only their own working classes, but also making all unorganized, technically backward people of Asia and Africa victims of economic imperialism."[35] Without reverence for humanity, the capitalism exploitation people, particularly of Asia and Africa. Iqbal was not wrong in his times, because the colonial system was doing the same. Woodruff argues that power must be wedded with reverence: "power without reverence – that is a catastrophe for all concerned."[36] Similarly, Iqbal writes, "God Almighty may grant humanity to those who are in places of power and government and teach them to cherish mankind."[37] Iqbal uses the expression 'vision' for reverence. He holds, "Vision without power does bring moral elevation but cannot give a lasting culture. Power without vision tends to become destructive and inhuman. Power and vision must combine for the spiritual expansion of humanity."[38] So, reverence is vital for political power to create peace in the world.

In Iqbal's philosophy, the second pathway to global peace is the ethics of human unity (which may also be stated as the unity of humanity, humans as a family, or a cosmopolitan community). In 'Iqbal Lecture 2023', entitled, "The Geopolitics of Peace in a Post-Western World," at Oxford University, Jeffrey Sachs holds that "ancient wisdom can help us to find solutions, whether it is Confucius, the Buddha, Aristotle, Averroes, or the prophet Isaiah. There is a commonality of views across the great faiths that I think is what Allama Iqbal was searching for, and that is vital, if we're going to find an end to this kind of conflict."[39] Sachs is right that Iqbal's ideas are strongly associated with historical common wisdom. Sachs finds this common wisdom in at least six sources, including the Greek, Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions.

Sachs infers three theses from these traditions: First, virtue ethics, which fosters human character, is central to these traditions. In the English and German world, utilitarian and deontological ethics have emerged in the last three centuries. In contrast to these ethical theories, virtue ethics focuses on individual responsibility.[40] Second, the ancient wisdom, based on virtue ethics, believes in a vision that acquires perfection, in which religion or spirituality is vital. For instance, "From Plato and Aristotle through various faiths, God or the first mover or the idea of the ideal form are the sense of perfection, and humans have a responsibility to strive for something better."[41] Sachs is correct that religion is indispensable in the traditional wisdom. Sachs states, "Iqbal emphasized that science and the spiritual are

conjoined, and ancient wisdom strongly emphasizes this point. The idea that religion and science are antithetical is a modern idea, not the idea of ancient wisdom."[42] Sachs is correct that religion and science were considered consistent in traditional human wisdom. Iqbal endorsed consistency between religion and science.

Third, virtue ethics believes in the idea of a single human family. Sachs states, "The modern genetics of *Homo Sapiens* proves this, rooted in our knowledge of the single human family in the migration from Africa around 70,000 years ago, as well as the idea that we can find a common spirit as the basis of our shared humanity, despite our distinctive faiths and cultures. This is a shared view of all of these ancient wisdom traditions."[43] The idea of shared humanity as a single human family, which virtue ethics and modern genetics support, is indispensable for peaceful co-existence. In this line of argument, Iqbal developed the idea of human fraternity, which supports the unity of humanity across distinctive faiths and cultures.

To establish global peace, the pertinent question is what is dependable unity among human beings worldwide. According to Iqbal, human fraternity[44] (brotherhood) is the dependable unity among human beings irrespective of people's race, colour or language.[45] In 'Brotherhood of Man', Iqbal states, "It is as if the day of doom had come upon the earth, in which each looks after the safety of his own skin, and in which no voice of human sympathy or fellowship is audible."[46] After more than eight decades, people still look for their own security, and a few cases of human sympathy and fellowship are reported. Iqbal asked: "Is this going to be the end of all progress and evolution of human civilisation?"[47] Iqbal could not survive more than four months since he raised the question. Soon after, the second world war broke out, proving that Iqbal's apprehension was correct. In this war, humanity was attacked because mutual hatred made life impossible on Earth. Iqbal declares: "Remember, man can be maintained on this earth only by honouring mankind, and this world will remain a battleground of ferocious beasts of prey unless and until the educational forces of the whole world as directed to inculcating in man respect for mankind. Do you not see that the people of Spain, though they have the same common bond of one race, one nationality, one language and one religion, are cutting one another's throats and destroying their culture and civilisation by their own hands owing to a difference in their own creed?"[48] In the excerpt, Iqbal uses two valuable expressions, including 'honouring mankind' and 'respect for mankind', which are consistent with reverence for humanity.

4. Conclusion

This article considered the problem of global peace with particular reference to Iqbal's pacifist moral and political philosophy. Iqbal's argument asserts that material interests exploit humanity and create conflicts that lead to violence or war. This materialism would lead the world toward the Third World War, which might not be a traditional one but a nuclear war that may destroy all forms of life on Earth. From a broader perspective, Iqbal's moral and political philosophy seeks an anti-racialisation, anti-nationalisation, anti-materialisation, anti-colonisation, and anti-imperialisation, which lead the human world toward peaceful co-existence. To avoid violence, Iqbal posits two key ideas: reverence for humanity and human fraternity. The first idea holds that reverence for humanity means not discriminating, humiliating, and exploiting people of other nations, which is essential for global peace. The second idea asserts that human fraternity is the only dependable unity to acquire peace. Iqbal states that treat others as if they are your brothers (sisters) for peaceful co-existence. To sum up, Iqbal's overarching pacifist moral and political philosophy implies global peace.

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